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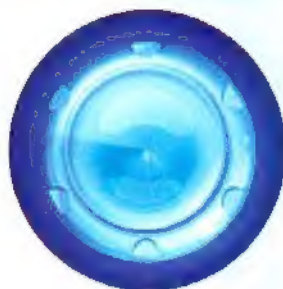
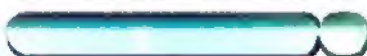
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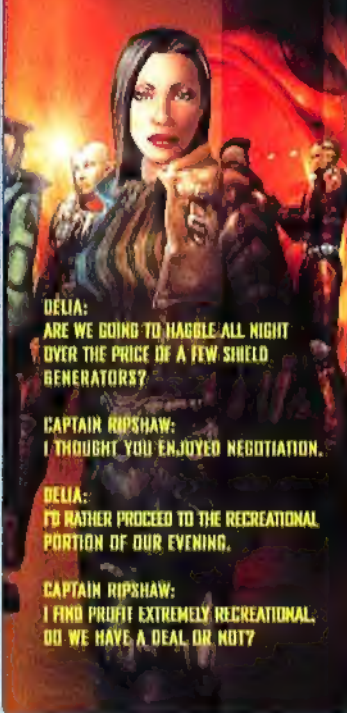
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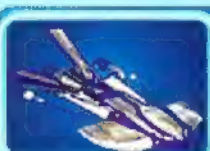
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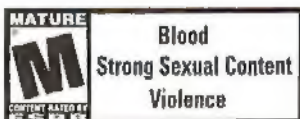




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Tom's nerd membership is about to get revoked.

14 Letters

You love us, you love us not. OK, so you don't love us. Will you hug us anyway?

26 Loading...

You like beautiful screenshots? Suuuuure you do! Check out these shots of *Lock On: Modern Air Combat*, *The Sims Online*, and *Command & Conquer: Generals*.

32 Read Me

Once again CGW contributes to the corruption of America's youth, this time by seeing how many stores would sell *Soldier of Fortune II* to a 12-year-old. Also, check out our preview of Nvidia's next-generation graphics technology. Plus, the Top 10 First-Person Shooters of all time, Game Math, Pipeline, and the triumphant return of the Dumpster Diver. All in one issue! How do we do it?

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Yes, Virginia, you can take it with you. Wil O'Neal tests five top-notch laptops that probably have more horsepower than the PC on your desk. Plus, we wail on a new rig by ABS and review ATI's latest All-In-Wonder. We also show you how to install a second hard drive.

109 Gamer's Edge

Multiplayer maps for *The Sum of All Fears*, tips on making the best character and finishing the hardest quests in *Morrowind*, and lessons on making a tank fly in *Grand Theft Auto III*. All that and a dirty Jedi trick.

124 Greenspeak

Jeff mows down pedestrians in *Grand Theft Auto III*, and likes it.

"It's simply the most amazing thing I've seen on my monitor since...well, I'm really not sure."

COVER STORY

58 Unreal Tournament 2003

It's beautiful, it's fast, it's got loads of improvements over *UT*, and it'll make you pee with glee. Feast your eyes on the amazing shots we got from our very own exclusive build of *UT2003*.



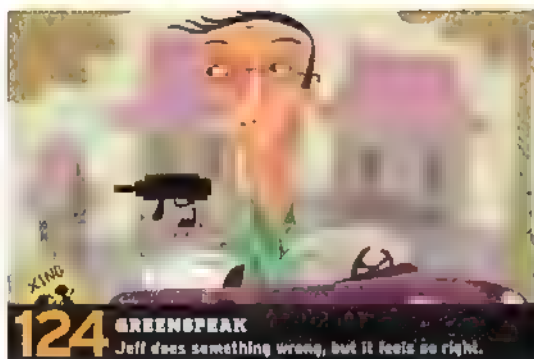


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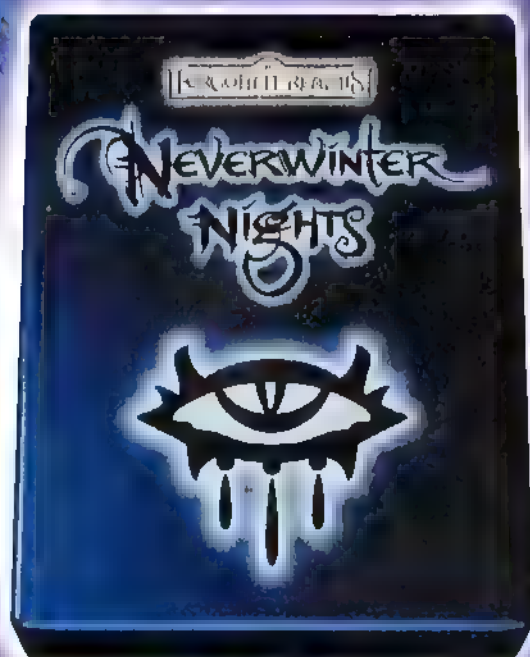
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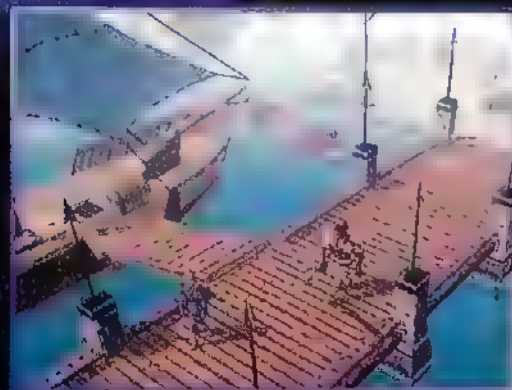
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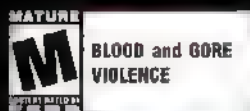
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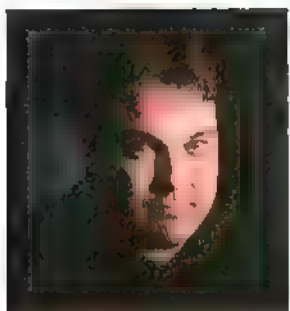


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THE
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Bring in the Nerds

Will O'Neal just broke my heart.

You see, I consider Will one of my confederates in the anti-El!, anti-D&D dorkwad faction here at CGW, a place overrun with pasty fantasy-geeks who like to brag about their Level 42 chaotic evil ashlomatic half-Dwarf Dark Mage Apprentice Rangers or something. Will and I used to make fun of twanks like Jeff and Scooter while we played "manly" games like *Counter-Strike* or *Madden*, but then he dropped a bomb on me. He told me he was going to actually play the copy of *Morrowind* he got for Xbox. Needless to say, I was devastated.

I guess it's just been a particularly sensitive month for me. While I've been lucky enough to have action games like this month's cover game *Unreal Tournament 2003* to mess around with, as well as the sublimely sick *Grand Theft Auto III*, I've had to put up with *Neverwinter Nights* being the talk of the office. Every innocent

lunchroom conversation that began with talk of hookers and SPANK quickly devolved into discussions of dire badgers and +2 hairberds of lame tude. I've never felt so alone.

You're probably thinking, "If he hates RPGs so much, what's he doing working at a place like CGW?" Rest assured, I have plenty of other holes punched in my nerd card. For instance, I'm one of the few people on staff who actually enjoys flight sims. And I'm a huge

strategy game fan—real time and turn based. I even love *WarCraft* despite its preponderance of Orcs. Criminy, the game I probably play more than anything is *Civ3*. I'm a dork, dammit! So why do I hate the Elves so?

I think it all leads back to this older kid that I lived on my cul-de-sac in the late '70s: True. True was a heshy with feathered hair, bad acne, and a school binder covered in Led Zeppelin logos and Tolkien references. He was way into D&D and heavy metal and his room was covered in posters of Ozzy and Gandalf. On the dorkometer True went to 11, and I guess I worried that if I ever started liking fantasy stuff, I would start liking skull candles and crappy music like Jethro Tull.

It's not like I completely avoided all things fantasy and RPG. I enjoyed *The Lord of the Rings*. I heard there's a book adaptation worth checking out. And I played *Dungeon Siege* all the way through—but only because I heard there were miniguns and grenade launchers. But in general, I think I'll stick with the rockets and AK-47s over the recurves and mauls.

So go ahead Will, play *Morrowind*. Have your little dalliance if you must. You'll be back.

Tom Price
Previews Editor

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"Diablo with a history lesson"
GameSpot

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Letters

Yay! We got mail! Send us more to cgwletters@ziffdavis.com. Yay!

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Government Double Standard?

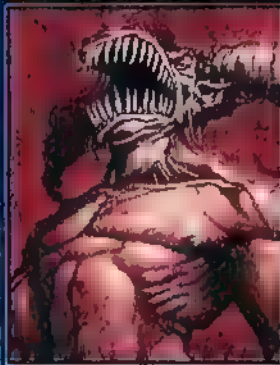
As I looked at the cover of the June 2002 issue I saw something that looked pretty cool. The U.S. Army is making a tactical shooter. How cool is that? The Army is making it so you know it'll be good. But as I read the article, a funny thought went through my head. The article says that you get to kill terrorists and stuff. But every time a big disaster happens, the video game industry is blamed for it. I guess it's OK for the Army to make a game where you kill people because it won't cause violence. If you have any idea why the U.S. heck the government can do this but everyone else can't, let me know.

Brian

MISSION TARGETS

FICTIONAL

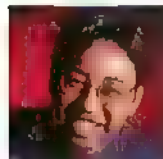
NONFICTIONAL



+01

+100

LOADING...



Game Editor Math

I was perusing a back issue and noticed something. If you mentally morph the images of Jeff Green and former hardware editor Loyd Case the result is none other than Scooter. Is there some connection here you haven't told us about?

Walman

CGW Unfair to Tac Ops?

I was very disappointed with your review of Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror this month (July 2002). Does your magazine ever correct objectionable reviews? All I got from that review is the bias toward Counter-Strike that the reviewer makes more than obvious. As a member of the Tac Ops community, I ask myself why a magazine would even print a review like that....

The main point that your reviewer failed to mention about Counter-Strike is that ONE-ON-THREE players cheat, or use system hacks of one kind or another.

That review just made me decide your magazine is not only not worth buying, but also not worth reading.

Thanks for nothing!

David Jacoby

From your review:

"The levels aren't much better than the models, looking like second-rate, user created jobs."

It sounds as if the reviewer is not

aware that this is exactly what Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror is, a user mod for Unreal Tournament. Release 1.6 was pretty fun, and free. 2.0 went downhill, but at least it was still free. I can only imagine what people are paying \$30 for. A shiny box, perhaps?

Rich Fought
Destin, FL

Where Is Tim Schafer?

I was wondering if anyone knew anything about a new game from Tim Schafer? I know he left LucasArts, but after an amazing game like Grim Fandango you just can't stop there. If I were any company on the market right now I would hire this guy in a hurry as he is one of the smartest and unique game designers ever.

Shawn

Tim Schafer is indeed alive and well. He's got his own game company now, Double Fine Productions, and they're working on a new game, called Psychonauts, an action-adventure for the Xbox. We saw Psychonauts at E3, and it looked mighty cool indeed. But did we say "for the Xbox"? Yeah, we did. Dang.

Bad Attitude of the Month

My system sucks ass. It's an old Gateway with a 200Mhz Pentium MMX and a 4-gig hard drive. Naturally, with this piece of crap I find myself doing other things

with my life these days, and I have had a revelation: There's more to life than computers and gaming! I actually read books instead of just manuals and strategy guides, I watch the news instead of preview downloads. I EXERCISE! I want to thank the people who do "Get a Life" every month, because until I get a new computer, I am going to actually have a life!

Clock52980

Um, we really didn't mean for you to take Get a Life that seriously, Clock. Now put that book down, put the free weights away, grab some Cheetos, and fire up Counter-Strike! Don't make us cancel your subscription.



We Want a LOTR Game, My Preciousssss....

This is a complaint of how unfair the world is. We have waited, and waited, and waited patiently for a Lord of the Rings game (a good Lord of the Rings game, mind you), and what does Electronic Arts (the only

**"Why can't you become a Sith? Or an Ewok?
Ewoks are the coolest race EVER!"**

IL-2 SWEEPS SIMULATION AWARDS



"...one of the best WWII flight
sims ever produced..."

- PC Gamer

"...destined to be a classic...
the most beautiful flight sim
to date." Rated 9.2 - "Superb"

- GameSpot.com

"I've never seen clouds
this realistic...brings a fresh
approach to the sim genre."

- IGN PC.com

"No kidding...the AI is
amazing. Never before has a
game designer kept
so many promises."

- CombatSim.com

IL-2 STURMOVIK WWII COMBAT SIMULATOR

- ★ 31 flyable WWII aircraft
- ★ Engage in aerial dogfights or cooperative missions
- ★ Join Axis or Red Army forces and play fighter or bomber campaigns
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Violence



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MAIL BITES

Re: No One Lives Forever 2: Evil mimes with French accents?

Kashio

When I first read your magazine it was like I was in heaven.

Barbatic Beef

The Sims is an abomination to the gaming world.

Steve-O G.

Jeff Green is one sexy bitch.

Collin Harvin

"I think I finally figured out how Bejeweled became so addicting. MIND CONTROL"

company to my knowledge that has the legal rights to make LOTR games based on the new movies) do? They side with Gates, once wise in lore but now mixing the blood of consoles and PCs, and make the game for that thrice-cursed green plastic abomination, Xbox! If they ever make the new Two Towers game on PC, please inform the rest of us. To use a modified version of the Dune phrase, "May the Xbox chip and shatter"

Michael

We agree with you Michael. And think about this: Has anyone ever seen Bill Gates and Gollum in the same room at the same time? We're just sayin'.

Thoughts from Room 101

I think I have finally figured out how Bejeweled became so addicting. MIND CONTROL. Yes, it was mind control. The music in Bejeweled runs a frequency out of your computer at 5Hz. Your brain, while doing unconscious things and involuntary things, runs at 5Hz-1.5Hz. Thus the frequencies from the music mess with your brain and therefore you become addicted worse than from morphine.

MasterTiger1

Shadowbane vs. Star Wars Galaxies

Hey, why don't you guys ever do a big 12-

page preview thing on Shadowbane? HUH? WHY? It's gonna be just as cool or cooler than Star Wars Galaxies. Wait, never mind, Shadowbane is gonna grab it by the throat and grind it into fine particles of crappy gameage. I think that Star Wars Galaxies are gonna be the two major contenders for MMORPG dominance, if they ever come out. But come on, a more experienced character has the same amount of life as one someone just made? That's insane. How in the world would higher-level monsters be able to hit harder if the people fighting it only have 30 life? And INSTITUTONALIZING TWINKING?!?!? WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?!?!? And what about the Silh? Why can't you become the Silh? Or an Ewok? Ewoks are the coolest race EVER! And what about Lightsabers? That is what Star Wars is based on! I didn't notice a thing about Lightsabers in your preview. If you can't chop someone in half or melt a door, what's the point of the game? Don't get me wrong, the game looks cool but, well, Shadowbane looks way cooler.

And, by the way, there are three different player races in Shadowbane that need to be unlocked, not just two, as you incorrectly stated on page 33 of June's issue. Also, when the heck did you guys get your goods for that preview on Shadowbane? The graphics

look a year old, as well as your info.

I love your magazine, but if you do not do a 12-page feature on Shadowbane, I will be forced to hurt you all. Bad y.

Blake Sampeck

Is it just us, or are the Shadowbane fanboys particularly, uh, rabid?

All Word Obsessive

Hello all. First time writer, long time reader. And I mean long. It's starting to get scary when the "15 years ago" covers start to look familiar.

Anyway, I decided to break my silence because I just couldn't stand it anymore. It's not like the CGW readership to let a pop-culture reference just sit out there in the magazine for so long. I mean come on—Isn't this the demographic that when not sitting on their butts playing games are watching Spider-Man for the 16th time to find that last continually error they read about on the Web? What's happening here? I thought CGW readers were the lords of all geekdom but now I just don't know anymore. How could they not notice Bonesstorm sitting out there in the Pipeline month after month and not mention it? It was even in the article on most anticipated games, or something, but still! not a word in the Letters section. What's it going to take, an editorial by Comic Book Guy?

STAR WARS GALAXIES CONTEST ENTRIES

After collecting and sorting the massive amount of submissions for the contest we had in June, we came to a couple of conclusions: 1) many of our readers are not the hopelessly pathetic geeks we expected you to be—in fact, you're worse; and 2) some of you have pretty screwy interpretations of what constitutes a "postcard." Steven Auldridge tried to stack the deck by sending in a 20-inch tall standee of a bikini model. We thought that leaving his address between her legs was a classy touch, but our managing editor, Dana, wasn't as impressed. More bizarrely, we received several cards cut from product packaging, including laundry detergent, Wheat Thins, Popsicle sticks, and lasagna. OK, people, we know times are tough, but postcards made even of Tide boxes?

Actually, we had a blast poring over all the strange and sublime attempts to win an early beta of Star Wars Galaxies. Here are a few of the, uh, "highlights."



The war is far from over!

"Solid premise, solid presentation... The hopes for Sudden Strike 2 are certainly high" **IGN**

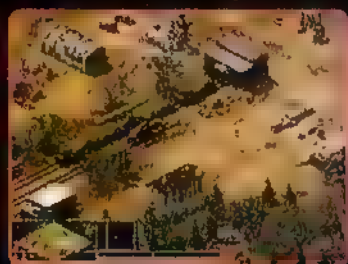
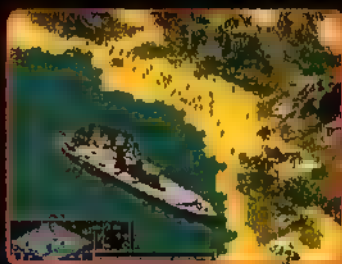
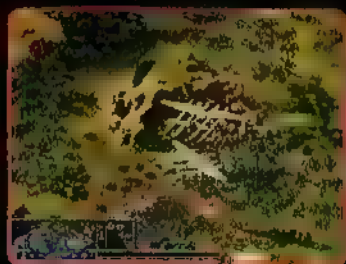
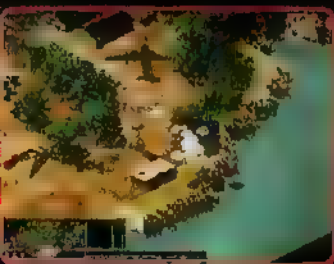
"With its richly detailed and historically accurate units, the game will appeal to all fans of WWII games" **GameSpot**

SUDDEN STRIKE

The world is an enormous battlefield, and you're on the front line, in the center of realistic WWII strategic battle action! Command German, Russian, British, American or Japanese troops and fight on water, land and in the air to destroy your enemies and win the war!

Features:

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For further information please see our website:

www.suddenstrike2.com

cdv
www.cdv.de



The only alternative is too frightening to consider: That the first season of *The Simpsons* was so long ago that only people as old myself and Jeff Green even remember it. Please, please tell me I'm wrong.

Gray Hancock
Houston, TX

Comic Book Guy responds:

You are correct, sir. However, your letter would have been much more authoritative had you cited the origin of the *Bonestorm* reference. That would be entitled "Marge Be Not Proud," which first aired on December 17, 1995.



"How could [your readers] not notice *Bonestorm* sitting out there in Pipeline month after month?"

Speaking of Comic Book Guy...

I am writing in response to a letter in your August 2002 Issue. The letter (from Jeff Massie, OK) stated that you were wrong in your count of Jedi in the movies. However, within the first three films, you are, in fact, correct in stating there are "at most four Jedi running around." Jeff fails to take into account a few things.

1) In *A New Hope*, the only one of the three that Master Obi-Wan Kenobi is alive in, Luke Skywalker is not a Jedi. Technically, he is not even a Padawan learner. He does not go to seek out Yoda until *Empire Strikes Back*, and then, does not become a Jedi Master until *Return of the*

Jedi, hence the name of the third movie.

2) The inclusion of Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine is a false one, because they were the Dark Lords of the Sith, which were technically not Jedi. They were not even Dark Jedi.

Thus, knowing these two points of knowledge, it changes the count of actual Jedi in the movies. In *A New Hope*, the only Jedi seen is Obi-Wan Kenobi, though we learn that Master Yoda also existed then, so, in a way, there were two Jedi and two Sith Lords. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda is the only Jedi master left alive, so there is but one Jedi and two Sith Lords. In *Return of the Jedi*, Yoda dies, and therefore Luke becomes a Jedi and is left as the only Jedi, so there is still one Jedi and two Sith Lords. I think that, even including the Sith Lords in with the Jedi, and using the term Masters of the Force, rather than the term Jedi, there are still "at most four [Masters of the Force] running around" at any given time. So, the REAL Star Wars freaks would appreciate it if some of those amongst them would brush up on their history.

Darth Gomez



Yoda Wannabe

I've been reading your magazine for a long time now, and I just wanted to say something about y'all. Man, you guys are the best! I think there should be people outside y'all's building chanting and saying that y'all are the best. I haven't seen a better magazine than y'all's. If it wasn't for you guys, I would never ever have bought *Dungeon Siege*. If y'all get any better games than that, put them in there! I'm just so glad y'all or whoever made this magazine. And tell Greeny that it's OK if he's a loser.

Kyle Taylor

P.S. If you're wondering about some words, I'm from Texas.

Penny Arcade

BY MIKE KRAHULIK AND JERRY HOLKINS

The moment you register for the *Army* game, a detachment of special forces commandos takes flight in an evil-looking black helicopter.

Machine-gun fire withers your mother's axileas as deadly soldiers drop like spiders on silver strands.



Welcome to America's Army

Are you ready to be all you can be, Bobby?

I think I peed my pants!

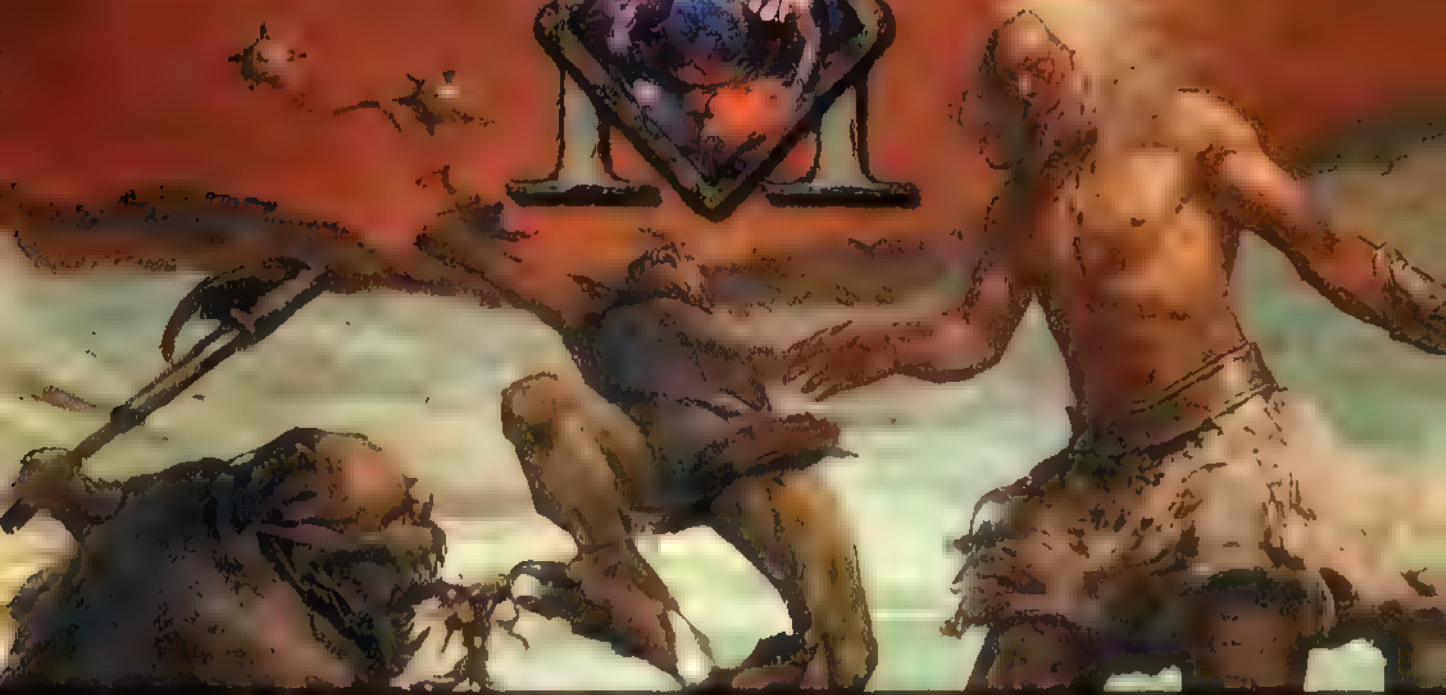
That's your penis talking, son. Says he's proud of ya.

© 2002 MIKE KRAHULIK AND JERRY HOLKINS

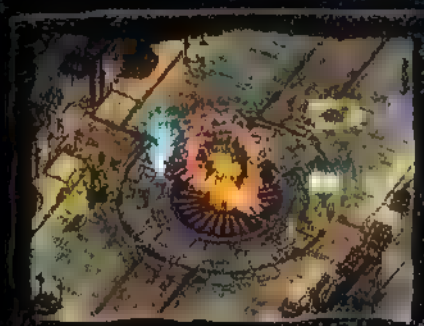
WWW.PENNY-ARCADE.COM

FORGOTTEN REALMS

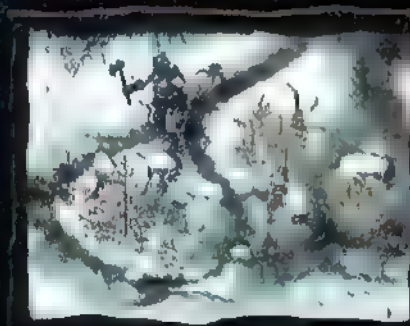
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Conquer the Hordes, or Die Trying!



Form a band of adventurers using the 3rd Edition
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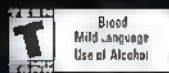
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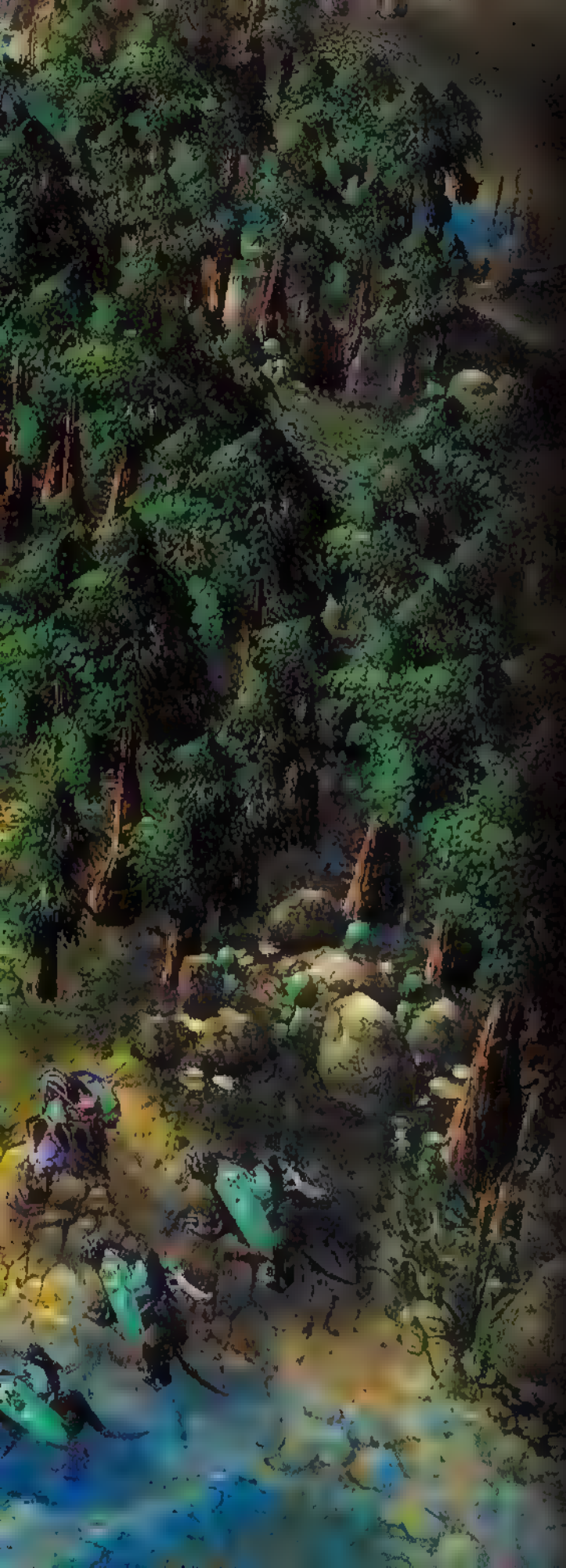
Wielding arcane might, the Archmage smites all who oppose him.

Channeling chaotic powers, the Demon Hunter walks the line between shadow and light.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
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Blood

Violence



WHAT WILL YOUR LEGEND BE?

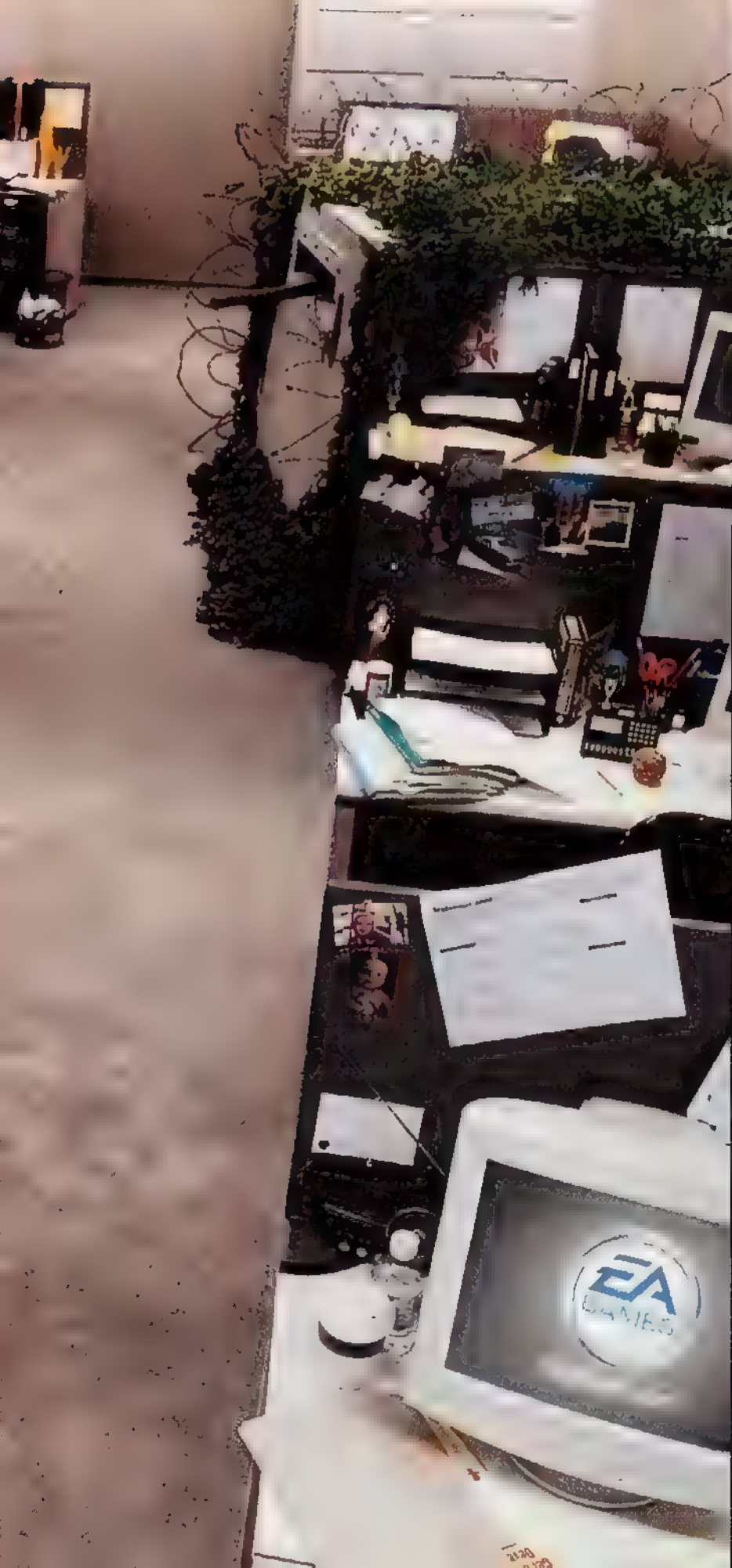


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Action



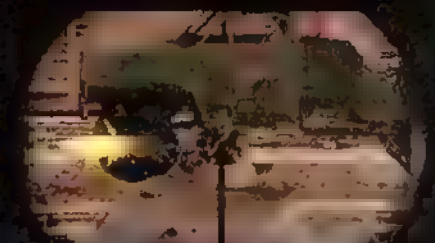
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64 fearless players



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20 deadly weapons



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1 explosive online battle

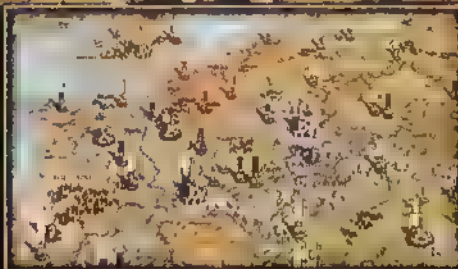
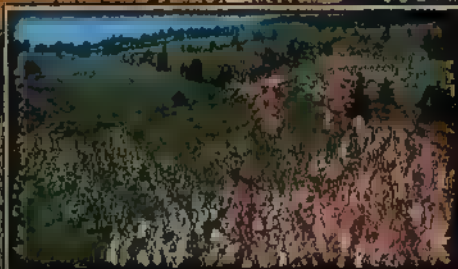
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SOME PEOPLE SAY WAR
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PERHAPS THEY'RE USING THE WRONG STRATEGY.

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MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR™ CHALLENGES PLAYERS TO RE-SHAPE FOUR CENTURIES OF HISTORY
THROUGH A COMBINATION OF EPIC 3D REAL-TIME BATTLES AND TURN-BASED EMPIRE BUILDING.
CHOOSE YOUR ALLIES WISELY AND DEAL SWIFTLY AND MERCILESSLY WITH YOUR ENEMIES.
THIS IS NO TIME FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED. THIS IS **TOTAL WAR™**.



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Loading...

The hottest shots of the best new games Edited by Tom Price

COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The C&C franchise is finally going 3D, but what's to prevent *Generals* from being another *Emperor: Battle for Dune*? For one, the team behind *Red Alert 2* and *Yuri's Revenge* is at the helm this time. Also, the fantastical elements of *Tiberian Sun* are stripped away, and replaced with a more "realistic" post-20th century feel. You can play as either the technocratic U.S., the populous Chinese, or the scruffy Global Liberation Army (GLA). The polished gameplay of the *Red Alert* series married with the spiffy 3D engine could be the formula for a new Westwood classic. Hopefully, it will ship this winter, so that we can see a 3D rendition of what it'd be like to drop a Chinese nuke on some terrorist scum.

This GLA camp is ripe for a nuclear strike, a special attack from the Chinese.

The GLA are all about guerrilla warfare, preferring fast, quick-killing vehicles.



This GLA group
is destroying a dam
which in turn will flood
out a nearby village
tomorrow

The Americans (blue) like
using technology to protect
their soldiers, hence the
reliance on a few heavy
tanks for this strike force.

THE SIMS ONLINE

Can you imagine a fairy-tale castle full of heart-shaped Jacuzzis, black velvet paintings, and melting snowmen lorded over by an albino in full *Rocky Horror* garb? Jeff Green can every night when he slips into dreamland. Well, dear sweet gentle Jeffy, your most precious dreams can be realized in *The Sims Online*, the massively multiplayer version of the best-selling PC game of all time. *The Sims Online* should be the ultimate possibility space, the biggest, most surreal playground ever, with countless people indulging their most twisted impulses when the game ships late this year. Check out our exclusive hands-on cover story next month to see if Jeff was able to build his little piece of paradise.





Look at the
best color!

It's my party and
I'll have a nervous
breakdown if I
want to...

Woo-hoo! This is going to be
the best blind date EVER!

I thought
the new
mead

I just received
a letter

men's and, "For
his 'Vacation' stuff
going online"

p with
d as me

LOCK ON: MODERN AIR COMBAT

What is it about *Lock On* that has us so excited? Is it the absolutely stunning visuals? Well, sure, otherwise we wouldn't put it in the Loading section. Perhaps it's the promise of truly scalable difficulty, a Holy Grail for flight sims that want to reach a mass audience. What really gets us about *LOMAC* is the fact that it's the first serious jet-fighter sim to come along in a long time that let's you fly ugly-ass tankbusters like the A-10 Warthog and the Su-25 Frogfoot. And you know how we like to blow up stuff.



American tanks are some of the most advanced in the world, but nothing can really withstand a precision airstrike.



The terrain modeling in LOMAC is extremely detailed, down to three centimeters.

The MiG-29 is the hottest multirole fighter ever built by the Russians.

Read Me

Postcards from our journey to the holodeck Edited by Ken Brown

My, what big teeth you have—and we unsightly pixels! Games using Nvidia's upcoming tech will have four times the level of detail.

SPECIAL REPORT

So Real It's Scary!

Nvidia prepares to unveil their next technological tour de force. What will it mean to gamers? By William O'Neal

CITY OF HEROES

Building your super-hero dreams, one cape at a time. **Page 36**

TOP 10 SHOOTERS

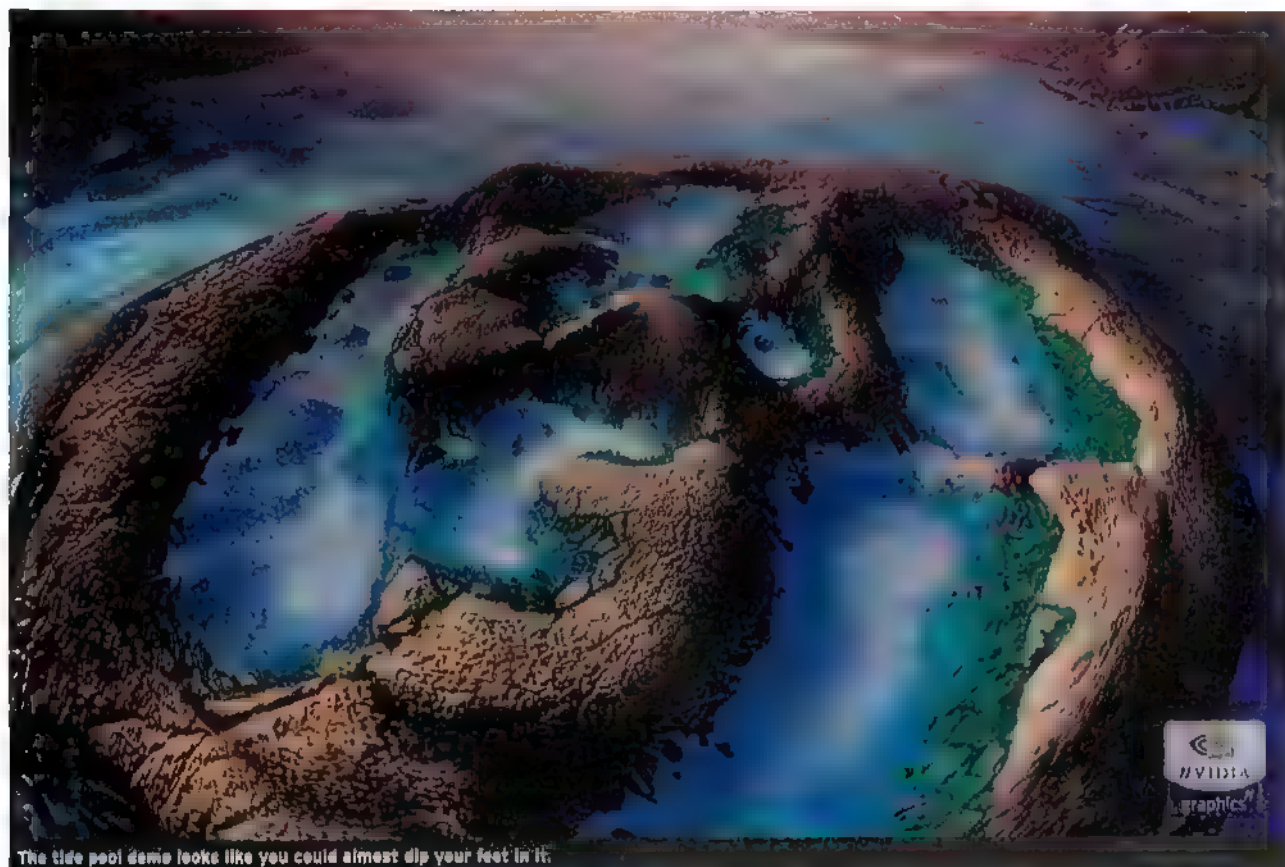
There's our list and your list. Who's right? We are. **Page 38**

MATURE GAMES

Should kids be able to buy *Soldier of Fortune II*? **Page 40**

RISE OF NATIONS

There's a lot to like in this strategy hybrid. **Page 44**



The tide pool demo looks like you could almost dip your feet in it.

Sometime in the next few weeks, Nvidia is scheduled to launch their latest insanely powerful new graphics chip for gaming. It's one of the amazing things about the gaming biz that while we haven't even seen the full capabilities of the GeForce4, Nvidia is on the verge of debuting their Next Big Thing. Frankly, we're wondering what all the hoo-ha is about, since *Solitaire* still looks pretty much the same to us.

So we decided to find out what the latest advances will mean in terms of games. We grabbed our jargon decoders and +4 thinking caps and made a pilgrimage to the mad genius behind all this: Nvidia's Chief Scientist David Kirk.

Cinematic Rendering

The Holy Grail of graphics technology is real-time cinematic quality: games that look as good as first-rate animated movies. While people have been promising this for some time, Kirk believes that we're less than a year away from real-time rendered versions of the prerendered graphics we saw in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

To achieve this milestone, Nvidia is

"New games based on movies such as *Lord of the Rings* will have a lot more of the feel of the movie."—David Kirk, Nvidia

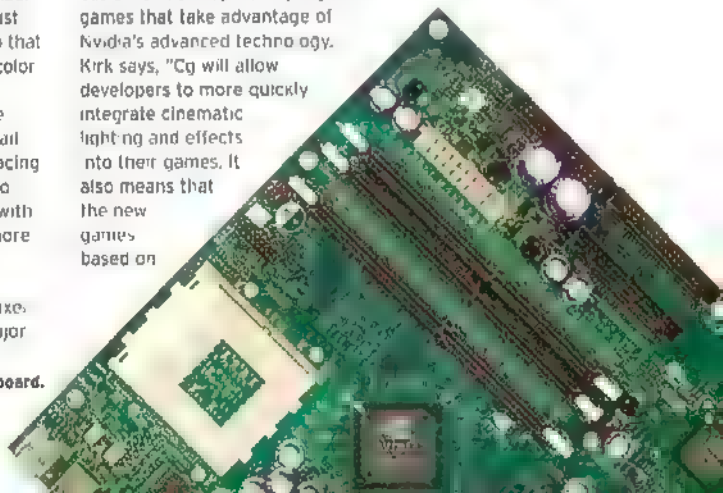
working on both the hardware and software fronts. On the hardware side, the next major advances will be more programmable than ever before, boast a more efficient architecture, have better shaders, and will soon have 128-bit color, according to Kirk. "There are a number of special effects that developers just can't do properly with the precision that they have now, which is 8 bits per color component," he says.

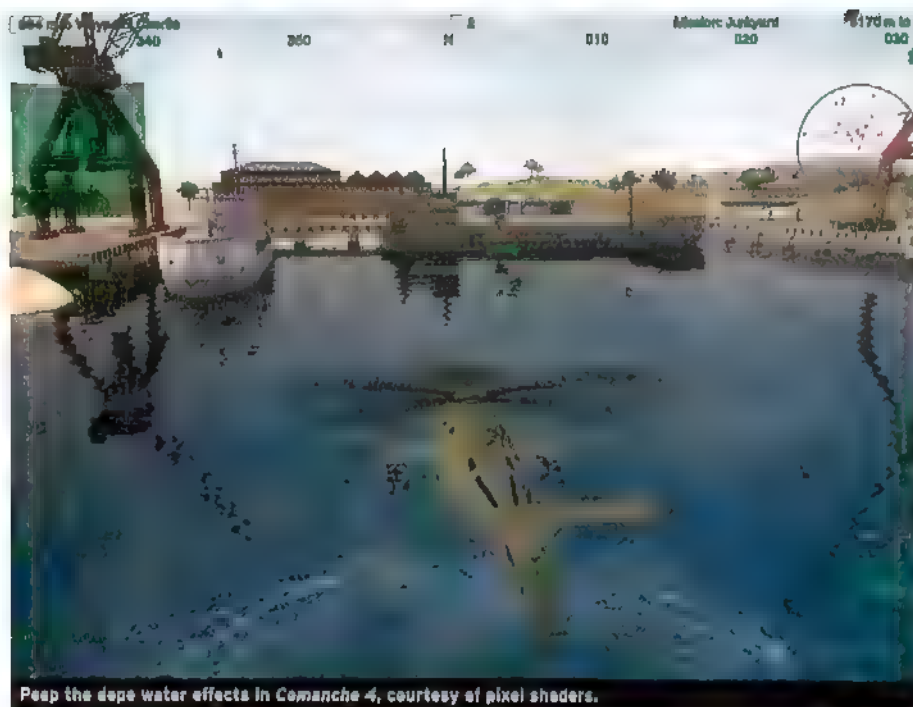
All of these advances will enable incredible amounts of graphic detail. The Wolfman screenshot on the facing page provides a glimpse of what to expect: more realistic characters with creepier hair, glossier eyes, and more lifelike movements. A technology called pixel shading is largely responsible for these advances. Pixel shading is one of Nvidia's next major

breakthroughs, and it will make it easier for developers to portray lifelike scenery and characters.

On the software side, Nvidia is rolling out a new programming language called Cg. According to Kirk, Cg makes it easier for developers to program games that take advantage of Nvidia's advanced technology. Kirk says, "Cg will allow developers to more quickly integrate cinematic lighting and effects into their games. It also means that the new games based on

The first-generation nForce motherboard.





Kirk believes that we're less than a year away from having games that look as good as *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

movies such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars* will have a lot more of the feel of the movies.

Meanwhile, the computer industry is on the verge of rolling out AGP 8x, and we expect Nvidia's latest technology to

take full advantage of it. In a nutshell, AGP 8x will provide twice the bandwidth of AGP 4x, resulting in higher resolution textures, bigger and more varied environments, and more geometry.

NForce Gets an Update

Until recently, only serious computer gamers had systems that were capable of showing off the latest whiz-bang features. That's because gamers were the only ones willing to plunk down \$150 or more on a high-end graphics card. That's about to change, because Nvidia technology is also being built into motherboards.

Featuring onboard Nvidia graphics chips, these mobos are known as nForce motherboards. The first version came out last year, but the next round (nForce2) will offer some pretty stout features, including a GeForce4 MX graphics processor, USB 2.0, FireWire, and a DualDDR memory that Nvidia claims offers "twice the bandwidth and half the latency." The nForce2 will be compatible only with AMD processors, but it can be upgraded with the addition of a more powerful graphics card.

Broadband users will be interested in the nForce, because it has an integrated gateway that serves as an onboard broadband router, which could save users another \$100. Furthermore, the nForce2 platform will support AGP 8x, and it is optimized to take advantage of faster memory technologies like DDR400, 333, and 266. nForce2 motherboards will boast two Ethernet ports, an Nvidia IO/100 port and a 3Com IO/100 port. The boards will be available from PC manufacturers and as a stand-alone item from Asus, Abit, and MSI.

All in all, Nvidia seems poised to advance both its graphical and platform technology even further, which should be good news to gamers who want to see the PC's return to prominence in gaming graphics.

DESIGNER

Raves and faves of the game designers By Mark Ashor



DAVE BENTEN

Sony Online Entertainment (*Star Wars Galaxies*)

NOW PLAYING: *Morrowind*, because it's just piled with detail!

LISTENING TO: Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan (I'm on a jazz kick), *Appalachian Waltz* (Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, Mark O'Connor), and Martin Sexton's awesome new *Live Wide Open*

READING: *Revelation Space* by Alastair Reynolds, an interesting space opera. I'm about to start *Linked: The New Science of Networks* by Barabasi, which looks like a good next step after Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*.



BRIAN REYNOLDS

Big Huge Games (*Rise of Nations*)

NOW PLAYING: *Dungeon Siege*, because the graphics are fantastic, I like the interface, and I like the way the characters advance based on what they're actually doing

LISTENING TO: Not much time to listen to music, but if I did, it would probably be some indie Girls CD from 10 years back.

READING: *A Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin, because so many friends have told me it's the first decent fantasy series in decades.



DAVE BENTEN

Irrational Games (*Freedom Force*)

NOW PLAYING: *Age of Wonders II*, because it gives me that *Master of Magic* sugar rush

LISTENING TO: Tenacious D and *Bully the Vampire Slayer* soundtrack

READING: Good time to ask me, as it's something remotely intelligent. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* by a New York Times journalist. Good read; makes some of the craziness comprehensible.

intel



Don't hold your games back.





PREVIEW

Foe Fighters

Cryptic Studios prepares a hostile reception for evil-doers in the massively multiplayer *City of Heroes* *By Robert Coffey*



I imagine thousands of gamers like yourself running around in bright spandex. Frightening, isn't it? Luckily, Cryptic Studios has figured out a way to let all of us wanna be Daredevils and Scarlet Witches indulge our superhero fantasies without the hideous spectacle of pockmarked buttocks vacuum-sealed into form-fitting tights. Bless you, Cryptic Studios, and bless your massively multiplayer online game, *City of Heroes*.

City of Heroes was one of the best surprises we had at E3. We never expected a game slated for late 2003 to look as sharp as it did. The engine looked great, with rich colors perfectly suited for its comic book inspiration. We saw a number of different environments including sweeping cityscapes, top-secret hero headquarters, and underground strongholds of evil. Cryptic was even able

to show us how the "pocket universe" system for both group and solo missions will prevent players from camping at respawn points. It was all good stuff.

Perhaps the game is coming together so well because it has already been gestating for three years. All the basic systems (combat missions, character creation, etc.) are already in place, and the team is now refining the core systems to make sure everything works. And, of course, they're adding tons of content all the time.

What they won't be adding for the foreseeable future are playable supervillains. While gamers will be able to design their own superhero from a large number of abilities and almost limitless costume options, supervillainy isn't going to be an option—at least at launch. "When we do add player-controlled villains," explains Dakan, "we want to do something really interesting with them."

Not just PvP but a whole new way of playing, a whole new player experience.

Cryptic expects that *City of Heroes* will be just as fulfilling and addictive as any online world, probably more so. According to Dakan, "You can do anything in a world like this. You can do anything you can do in a fantasy world, but it has more immediacy and impact because it's in a modern city, a world you recognize." We can't wait to strap on our utility belts and smack evil when Cryptic starts their beta test.



We didn't expect a game slated for late 2003 to look as sharp as *City of Heroes*.

Spells punishing: 26,875

Tournaments underway: 882

Creatures attacking: 49,438

Prizes on the line: \$,000

Deadly strategies: Unlimited

MAGIC

The Gathering®

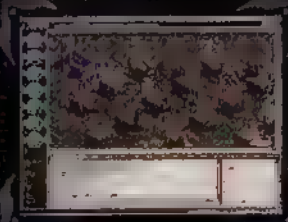
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MOST COMPETITION



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LIST-O-RAMA

Top 10 First-Person Shooters

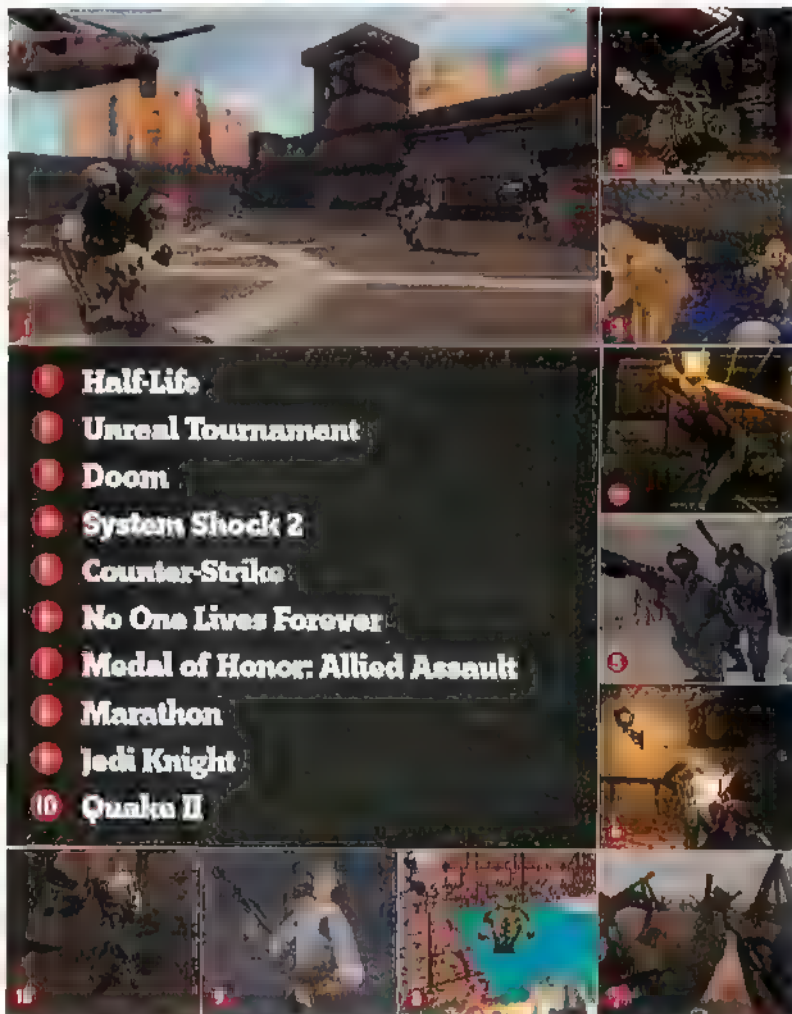
We settle it once and for all. At least, until *UT2003* comes out **By Ken Brown**

There probably hasn't been a day in the last five years when at least one of us didn't boot up a shooter. We can't get enough of them. But we've never actually taken the time to rank our favorites.

This is our list, painstakingly arrived at after two polls and several calculations to eliminate ties. Before it was all said and done, though, there were two sticking points: Should *System Shock 2* be considered a shooter? It's actually a first-person role-playing game that can be played either as a shooter, or by avoiding enemies through stealth. Ultimately we decided to leave it in, because many of us played it as a straight shooter. And since it has elements of both games, we can include it in a possible Top 10 RPGs.

The other question was about *Crusader*. Reviews Editor Robert Coffey underlook his own crusade to change the list to "Top 10 Shooters," which would make the third-person *Crusader* eligible. Others argued that the list was more interesting if it covered only first-person. Thankfully, that seemed to shut him up, if only for the time being.

So how does this jibe with your list? Tell us what you think at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com



Quake II: John D. Cook; Unreal Tournament: Garry Schott; Doom: John D. Cook; System Shock 2: John D. Cook; Counter-Strike: John D. Cook; No One Lives Forever: John D. Cook; Medal of Honor: Allied Assault: John D. Cook; Marathon: John D. Cook; Jedi Knight: John D. Cook; Quake II: John D. Cook

READER POLL

Your favorite first-person shooters are:

- 1 Doom
- 2 Half-Life
- 3 Counter-Strike
- 4 Unreal Tournament
- 5 No One Lives Forever

—SOURCE: GAMERS.ORG

GAME MATH

Formulas they never taught in game school **By Erik Wopaw**

(Quake II) + (Doom) + Logos Color Christian Clip Art for Win9x = CATECHUMEN

Elite + Turbo Tax = BATTLECRUISER 3000

(Serious Sam) + KISS Pinball = KISS + KISS: PSYCHO CIRCUS

American McGee's Alice + Balance of Power = SUPERPOWER



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- ✦ Master the tactics of the desert!
- ✦ Battle fierce rival lords during Skirmish Mode!

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SPECIAL REPORT

A Minor Problem

Who's responsible for making sure kids don't buy Mature games?

By Ken Brown

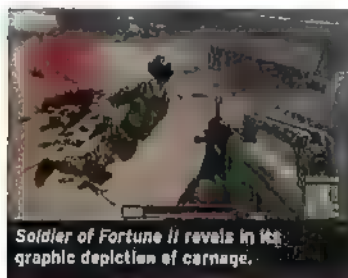


It's an issue that raises its ugly head every few years whenever there's a violent crime that could somehow be blamed on a game (Columbine), or whenever there's a high-profile game with violent content (*Grand Theft Auto III*). The issue: Should kids be able to buy Mature-rated software at retail?

At first glance, it seems fairly straightforward. Most people would

probably agree that it's better if 10-year-old Timmy can't saunter in to Kmart and pick up a copy of *Soldier of Fortune II*. As it turns out, the folks at Kmart agree, and they've voluntarily imposed a policy that they won't sell Mature-rated games to minors. But Timmy's a smart kid, and he knows if he can't score there, he can easily nab his game in a dozen other places.

And that's what concerns Rep. Joe Baca of California. Baca has introduced a bill before Congress that would impose fines and possible jail terms on retailers that sold certain types of games to minors. His bill is called the Protect Children from Video Game Sex and Violence Act of 2002, but you might as well call it the *Grand Theft Auto III* Act, because it applies to many of the things you can do in that game: decapitation, amputation, murder, rape, carjacking, aggravated assault, and other sorts of things you hear about on the 6 o'clock



Soldier of Fortune II reveals in its graphic depiction of carnage.

Decapitation, amputation, murder, rape, carjacking, aggravated assault... To gamers, those are features. To politicians, they're an outrage.

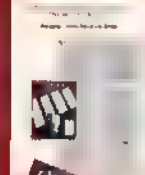
5, 10, 15 YEARS
AGO IN CGW

Five Years Ago, September 1997



Who bats 1,000? Certainly not us. Our 100 Hot New Games cover story hit upon some future classics, including: *Half-Life*, *Interstate 777*, *Myth*, and a little game named *StarCraft*. We also raved about a couple of games that never came to be: *Star Trek: The Secret of Vulcan Fury* and *WarCraft Adventures*. But we whiffed big on *Dink's World* and *The Game That Makes Baby Jesus Cry*, *Trespasser*.

Ten Years Ago, September 1992



For all the people who grouse about the downfall of CGW, why doesn't anyone mention Omar Sharif? Has any matinee idol ever aged so poorly? Ten years ago the former Dr. Zhivago was a silvery suave fellow; now he looks like one of those dried apple heads you find at craft fairs. Memo to Marketing: Just use his name, not his monomillion mug.

Fifteen Years Ago, September 1987



We actually printed these statements: "Say, remember that Wend of Nikademos you've been lugging around with you since the good old days in Geinor?" and "The most obvious choice, from a physicist's point of view, is a $1/R^2$ function; this is the standard function used for conservative fields arising from point sources in Euclidian space." Were we proto-nerds or just run-of-the-mill social lepers? Hard to tell.

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Even our 12-year-old buyer was surprised that stores sold him *Soldier of Fortune II*.

CGW QUICK POLL

Should retailers withhold selling Mature games to minors?

52%	No, it's the parents' responsibility to know what their kids are buying.
24%	No, the ratings are guidelines.
21%	Yes, children shouldn't be able to buy M-rated games.

Source: GameSpot

news. To gamers, those are *features*. To politicians, they're an outrage.

Grand Theft Auto III, incidentally, was the top-selling game of 2001.

At, of this plucked the curiosity of our hard-bitten team of news hounds at *CGW* (cough, cough). So we decided to find out whether Baca's concerns are well founded. We visited eight major retailers in Northern California to see just who would be so cautious as to sell Mature-rated games to minors. The answer, it turns out, is nearly everyone.

Natural Born Shoppers

We'll call our buyers "Mutt," age 12, and "Jeff," age 15. In CompUSA, Target, and Best Buy, both were able to buy *Soldier of Fortune II* without even a sideways glance. They were under more scrutiny returning the titles than they were when buying them. Mutt was denied from purchasing a Mature game from Kmart, Wal-Mart, and Toys R Us. In fact, Toys R Us was the only retailer we visited that actually checked the IDs of both of our subjects and denied them. Jeff breezed through purchases at Electronics Boutique, GameStop (formerly Babbage's), CompUSA, Kmart, Target, Wal-Mart, and Best Buy. Kmart, you'll recall, has a policy against selling Mature games to minors. But Jeff skirted the more knowledgeable cashiers by checking out at the Garden Center. Wal-Mart's policy is even more strict: They won't sell M games to minors, and their registers actually prompt clerks to ask

for ID when selling a Mature game. In Mutt's case, he was busted. In Jeff's case, the clerk didn't notice or didn't care.

Swoolen with a strange mixture of bravado and moral outrage, we wheeled about to find the highest levels to which to submit our findings. Congress? The White House? Rev. Al Sharpton? But before we could compile a dossier, we discovered that the feds had beat us to it. Last year the Federal Trade Commission sent a bunch of kids to 400 stores around the country. Kids from ages 13 to 16 were able to buy Mature games 78 percent of the time. So Uncle Sam already knows.

So why hasn't legislation been proposed before now? After all, theaters won't let minors in to see R-rated movies, right? Well, actually they do. The FTC found that half of the time theaters will let kids under 17 get in to see R-rated movies. There's no law saying they can't—the policy is a voluntary one adopted by the National Association of Theater Owners. There are no penalties for violating the policy.

What About Games?

Should there be stricter policies for M games than there are for R movies? Retailers, of course, say no. And the software industry tends to agree.

Doug Lowenstein, the president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, says that the problem isn't as big as Baca thinks. In the first place, most kids don't buy M-rated games, he says. A recent IDSA study found that 97 percent of computer game buyers and 87 percent of console game buyers are 18 or over. Moreover, Lowenstein cited an FTC statistic that says when kids buy games, parents are involved in the purchase 82 percent of the time.

"The underlying assumption that hordes of kids are floating around with 60 bucks to buy M-rated games is simply not true," he says. "This is not a problem of gargantuan proportions."

Still, Lowenstein doesn't brush it off. His organization has encouraged retailers to enforce the ratings system and educate customers about it. He says, "It's an issue that the industry has to address and continue to work on, because it's the basis for a lot of criticism of the industry. We think enforcement is prudent and appropriate at retail. However, most minors don't buy many M-rated games anyway. So [proposals like Baca's] are to some degree solutions in search of a problem."

Whether Lowenstein or Baca is right, or whether the truth is somewhere in between, it's an issue that's bound to get more attention as the violence in games increases, and the blood looks more and more real.

What do you think? Send us your opinion at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com.



EXTENDED PLAY HOMEBREW

By T. Hyatt Baker

Shareware Standouts

There are so many great computer games produced by and for English-speaking people that it's easy to overlook the handful of outstanding foreign freeware and shareware games that appear each month. I looked at a particularly good one this month, along with an amazing single-player *Unreal Tournament* mod and an all-time classic shareware title no gamer should miss.

Get Amped

www.getamped.org

This party game is pure beat-'em-up action in the style of *Power Stone*, complete with multiple weapons, punching combos, and the slickest 3D



graphics you'll find this side of next-gen consoles. There's even an editor that lets you modify the characters' looks.

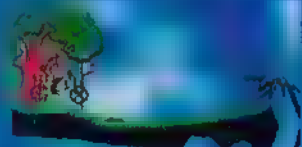
One big downside: The game, the Website, and the manual are all written in Japanese. Fortunately, once the game is up and running the controls are simple, and with a little Web searching you can find translated directions.

Elasto Mania

elastomania.com

Price: \$9.95

Elasto Mania's premise is simple—drive a car like



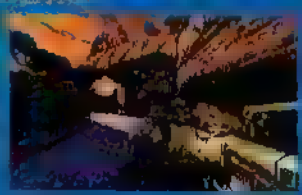
across hundreds of side- and vertically scrolling levels without flipping it. The only things getting in your way are a brutally unforgiving physical model and countless jumps, pits, and obstacles. There's no way to describe how the game looks or acts in action, but I'm sure the downloadable demo will fascinate you.

Elasto Mania is an update to the older *Action Supercross* game, with upgraded graphics, split-screen abilities, and an editor for making your own levels.

Operation No Pull for Unreal Tournament

www.planetunreal.com/teamvortex

This single-player mod for *UT* weighs in at 155MB, but is worth the long download. Sent out on a rescue mission, you end up becoming a prisoner yourself. Starting out with no



equipment, you must eventually fight your way through several Skaarj-infested levels to signal a ship to rescue you and the original human survivors. A project this huge and ambitious is bound to have a few bugs, and *ONP* has its share, but they're worth putting up with.

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Odin: Wisdom



Skadi: Winter



Njord: Sailing



Forsen: Justice



Baldr: Beauty

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You can fight in olden times!



You can fight in not-older times!



Each of the 18 cultures, like these Aztecs, will have unique architecture.

PREVIEW

Rise of Nations

It's not the *Age of Empires* knockoff it looks like **By Robert Coffey**

Boy has this game taken major leaps. Six months ago when I first saw *Rise of Nations*—demoed by a tall, bald smart-ass who didn't work for Big Huge Games—it looked like, sounded like, and was probably moot next to *Age of Empires*.

But recently lead designer Brian Reynolds showed the game at the CGW offices and let us play it. He wasn't as funny as the tall, bald smart-ass, but he gave a better demo and the game just shined. *Rise of Nations* is not an *Age* clone—it is its own game, and that game looks like it'll be one of the must haves of 2003.

On the surface it still resembles *Age*, but it's all the stuff underneath that makes it so

interesting. There are loads of innovations to cut down on the busy work: Idle workers automatically find something to do; resources don't deplete; units sent across bodies of water automatically spawn transports to ferry them; *farms don't dry up*. All these features create a play experience that lets us focus on building our nation and crushing our enemies.

But it was the fresh gameplay elements that really drew us in. We were amazed at how well the game blended the speed of RTS with the satisfying empire-building of a turn-based strategy game. As in *Civ3*, *Rise of Nations* creates borders that expand as your civilization develops. That's rewarding in and of itself, but

borders actually influence gameplay—building and resource gathering are possible only within your borders (no more tower rushes). Send your troops into enemy territory in a No Rush multiplayer game and you can watch them glow red and die quickly.

Finally, we were really impressed with the way nukes are handled: Throw too many warheads around and you'll start the Doomsday Clock and initiate a countdown to Armageddon, where *everyone* loses. Cool.

Even a year from release *Rise of Nations* seems to have found the winning blend of two seemingly disparate game types. We can't wait to see more.

REALITY CHECK

Reality Check compares the ratings of the major gaming press with GameRankings.com, which averages all published reviews for a particular title.

GAME	GTW	PC Gamer	IGN	GameSpot	IGN.com	Gamespy	GameRankings.com
Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project	B+	B	A	B	B	B+	B
Grand Theft Auto III	A+	A	A	A	A	A	A
Might and Magic IX	D-	C-	D-	C	C+	C	C
Morrowind	A	A	A+	A+	A	A-	A
Spider-Man: The Movie	B-	B+	B+	B	B+	B	B-
Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror	C-	C	D	C	C	B-	C

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Osiris: Underworld



Anubis: Death



Sekhmet: Warfare



Thoth: Technology

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Look Ma, it really is a normal sim game after all!

HANDS ON

Wet and Mild

Spring Break is more Resort Tycoon than wild college party

By Jason Brown

Call it a triumph of marketing over mechanics. Eidos appears to be packaging a resort sim as some sort of racy party romp complete with wet T-shirt contests, adjustable beer strength, and dirty dancing. They replaced the originally lame island map menus with titillating pictures of well-endowed women and thoroughly objectified young men. There's only one problem: None of these gaudy, voyeuristic details are the point of the game. They're really just small pieces of a fairly pedestrian strategy game

that would more aptly be

titled *Resort Tycoon*.

Much like *SimGolf* let players construct and maintain a golf course, *Virtual Resort: Spring Break* lets players build and run a resort. You hire staff like security guards, cleaners, and mechanics. If you're lax in your maintenance, bathrooms, shops and restaurants fall into disrepair. Guests want to have fun: They want to sunbathe, drink beer, and go swimming. Build beer stands, maintain clean beaches, and make sure you have lifeguards to warn the swimmers of sharks (or don't, and let the chomping begin).

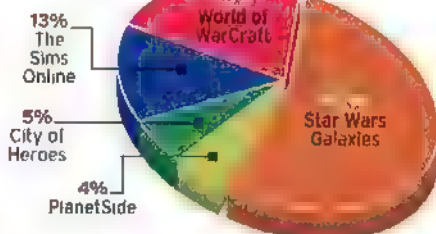
Helping your guests make a love connection will certainly

add to your hotel's appeal. You set the stage by building dance floors and nightclubs where beauty pageants, karaoke contests, dirty dancing, and more take place. When the sparks begin to fly, couples steal away to the beach and roll in the sand for a while.

But the end result of this action is that you make money, because happy guests stay longer. So the spots of raunchiness Eidos focuses on are really just small animations with little gameplay significance. Still, there are plenty of *Tycoon*-type games that are entertaining without titillation, so we hope that *Spring Break* will be, too.

QUICK POLL

What massively multiplayer online game are you most looking forward to?



Source: Gamers.com. Poll is not scientifically valid; it reflects only Internet users who chose to participate.

THE GOOD, THE



THE GOOD THE NEW BATTLE.NET

You can read the review of *WarCraft III* elsewhere in this issue, but here's a big thumbs up for the new battle.net features. With its nifty new anonymous matchmaking, you can now get into an online multiplayer game without any hassle or endless waiting—battle.net automatically assigns you to a game based on your preferences and skill level. Huzzah. Next on our wish list: a filter to keep our intern out of our in-house games.

THE BAD AMERICA'S ARMY DEMO LAUNCH



The U.S. Army rolled out a demo of their free online team multiplayer shooter (*America's Army*) over the July 4 weekend, and the launch was less than smooth, with major server overload leading to frustrated gamers. Maybe when they launch the full game, the government can get Jeb Bush and the Florida elections division to oversee the process. Just kidding.



THE ONLY LOTR DVDS

So we're obsessed with *Lord of the Rings*. Sue us. But our love is being pushed to the limit now with the shameless packaging of the LOTR "regular" and "special editions"—with just enough differences, and released just far enough apart, to practically guarantee that most geeks, like us, will buy both. Because we have to. We'll still be at *The Two Towers* on opening day. But, dang, don't make us feel dirty for loving you.

RANKINGS

CGW Top 20

Grand Theft Auto earns its money



The Sims: Vacation should be called a business trip.



Grand Theft Auto III jacks a spot at No. 2.



Jedi Knight II is an out-cast no more.

Rank	Last Month	Game	Rating
1	1	The Sims: Vacation (\$29, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
2	-	Grand Theft Auto III (\$49, Take 2)	★★★★★
3	4	Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast (\$48, LucasArts)	★★★★★
4	3	The Sims (\$41, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
5	11	Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind (\$47, Bethesda)	★★★★★
6	-	Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix (\$43, Activision)	★★★★☆
7	2	Dungeon Siege (\$43, Microsoft)	★★★★★
8	5	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault (\$45, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
9	7	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (\$28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
10	-	Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds: Clone Campaigns (\$30, LucasArts)	★★★★☆
11	6	The Sims: Hot Date (\$28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
12	-	Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds (\$40, LucasArts)	★★★★☆
13	10	RollerCoaster Tycoon (\$21, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
14	13	MS Zoo Tycoon (\$27, Microsoft)	★★★★☆
15	8	The Sims: Livin' Large (\$28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
16	12	StarCraft: Battlechest (\$21, Vivendi Universal)	NR
17	-	Spider-Man: The Movie (\$28, Activision)	★★★★☆
18	15	Diablo II: Lord of Destruction (\$31, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★★
19	7	Sim Theme Park (\$17, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
20	16	The Sims: House Party (\$29, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆

May retail sales results by NPD Intellect

NOTABLE QUOTE

"As part of our continuing efforts to strengthen our online, the additional cutbacks in staff."

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GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos	Blizzard Entertainment	7/3/02
Worms Triple Pack	Ubi Soft	7/5/02
G.I. Combat: Episode I, Battle of Normandy	Strategy First	7/11/02
Strike Fighters	Infogrames	7/12/02
Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubi Soft	7/15/02
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	7/30/02
The Thing	Vivendi	8/9/02
Counterstrike Condition Zero	Sierra	8/15/02
TaylorMade Golf	Infogrames	8/17/02
Lemmings Online	Interplay	8/26/02
Icewind Dale II with Adventure Pack	Interplay	8/26/02
Sniper	Infogrames	8/30/02
Battlefield 1942	Electronic Arts	9/5/02
Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom	Sierra	9/13/02
Rayman Arena	Ubi Soft	9/15/02
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Fidos	9/15/02
Unreal II: The Awakening	Infogrames	9/17/02
EverQuest: Planes of Power	Sony	10/1/02
Highland Warriors	Data Becker	10/4/02

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SIM WORLD

Face Dances

Put your face in *The Sims*, so you can finally make out with Bella Goth **By Rob Smolka**

If the real world isn't getting it done for you, we've got good news—Abacus, the company that specializes in add-ons for *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, has released *Face Factory*, a product that will let you put your own face into *The Sims*. Now, instead of controlling some weird

talking stranger for 10 to 12 hours a day, you can really go off the deep end and live your entire life inside the game!

All you need are a couple of digitized pictures of your face (one from the front and the other from the side). Import them into the program, line up a few points around your

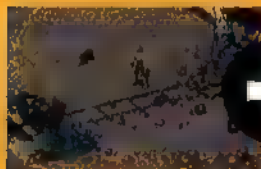
eyes, nose, and chin, and voila—you're in the game. Even better, the program lets you alter your face, so you can give yourself that nose job you always wanted.

You should be able to find *Face Factory* at your local software store, or visit www.abacuspub.com to order a copy (\$19.95).

DUMPSTER DIVER

Digging up gold in the bargain bins **By Jason Brown**

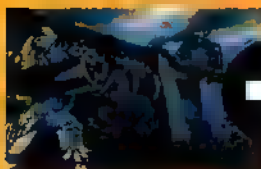
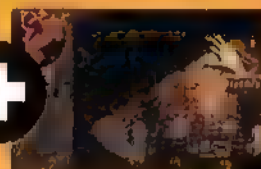
We're not saying you should buy these games instead of *SOF2*; we're saying you might want to think twice before plunking down \$50 on a so-so game when you could get five or six great games instead. But if you missed one or more of these titles when they first came out, scrounge around—they're a steal now. Unless the money's not important. And if that's the case, send us \$50 too!



Fallout 2 \$8



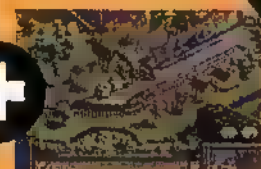
Dungeon Keeper 2 with Dungeon Keeper (original) \$9



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PIPELINE

Who's got the darts? By Jason Brown



I The appropriately torturous development of *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*, based on the writings of horror-meister H.P. Lovecraft, has entered a new nightmare realm: The game's developer, Headfirst Productions, is in a dispute with its publisher, Headfirst terminated its contract with publisher Ravensburger Interactive, citing breach of contract. The team claims that production is still moving ahead while they look for a new publisher. For its part, Ravensburger claims it's still on board. We'll let you know the story when the dust settles.



C Codemasters has some surprises in store for multiplayer *IGI2: Covert Strike*. Think of *Counter-Strike* mixed with *Rainbow Six*. The plan is to have teams compete to achieve various objectives, including hacking data satellites to launch space shuttles, bombing oil refineries, and escorting convoys. Also new is a monetary system that allows equipment purchases, and the ability to respawn. The cost to buy your way back into the game decreases over time, so players can choose to spend all their cash on a quick re-entry and buy little hardware, or wait for the time to expire and rejoin tool-ed up.



E Eldos claims that the fourth major game in the *Tomb Raider* series will represent a return to form for the buxom heroine. *Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness* will reportedly feature a more defined story, in which Ms. Croft is framed for the murder of her mentor, and is on the run. For the first time, you'll be able to control a male character during certain fighting sequences (like we care). In addition, Lara will be able to upgrade her abilities by finding secrets. (Can you imagine Lara being enhanced any further?) Dressed as a darker, more stylish *Tomb Raider*, this could be the reinvigoration the series needs.

Age of Mythology	Microsoft	09/04/02
Allens vs. Predator 2: Primal Hunt	Sierra	03 2002
Asheron's Call II	Microsoft	04 2002
Battlefield 1942	EA	09/17/02
Black Hawk Down	NeveLogic	03 2002
Call of Cthulhu	N/A	Q1 2003
City of Heroes	NCsoft	03 2002
Civilization III: Play the World	Infogrames	04 2002
Combat Flight Simulator 3	Microsoft	03 2002
Combat Mission 2: Barbarossa to Berlin	Big Time	03 2002
Command & Conquer: Generals	EA	04 2002
Conflict: Desert Storm	SCI	04 2002
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	08/15/02
Deus Ex 2	Eidos	02 2003
Doom III	Activision	TBA
Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubi Soft	03 2002
Duke Nukem Forever	GDD Games	2222
Earth and Beyond	EA	03 2002
EverQuest: The Planes of Power	Sony	03 2002
EverQuest II	Sony	03 2003
Final Fantasy XI	SquareSoft	TBA
Freelancer	Microsoft	04 2002
Full Throttle II	LucasArts	01 2004
Ghost Master	Empire Interactive	04 2002

HL: Combat	Strategy First	08/05/02
Gothic II	JoWood	04 2002
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	08/27/02
Hangaround	DreamCatcher	04 2002
Harpoon 4	Ubi Soft	12/10/02
Hidden & Dangerous 2	GDD Games	10/15/02
Hillman 2	Eidos	09/16/02
Home Movie Maker	R. Kelly	3 to 5 years
Homeworld 2	Sierra	TBA
Icwind Dale II	Interplay	03 2002
IGI2: Covert Strike	Codemasters	09/02
Imperium Galactica II	CDV	03 2002
Impossible Creatures	Microsoft	04 2002
Indiana Jones	LucasArts	04 2002
Industry Giant II	JoWood	09/05/02
James Bond 007: NightFire	EA	04 2002
Links 2003	Microsoft	03 2002
Luck On	Ubi Soft	04 2002
Lords of the Realm III	Sierra	TBA
Madden NFL 2003	EA Sports	03 2002
Mafia	Take 2	04 2002
Master of Orion III	Microprose	04 2002
Max Payne 2	Take 2	02 2004
The Matrix	Infogrames	03 2003
MechWarrior 4: Clan	Microsoft	07/26/02
Medieval: Total War	EA	09/04/02
NBA Live	EA Sports	03 2002
No One Lives Forever 2	Fox Interactive	TBA
O.R.B.	Strategy First	08/30/02
PlanetSide	Sony	04 2002
Predecessors	Eidos	03 2002
Prisoner of War	Codemasters	09/04/02
Project Nemads	CDV	03 2002

Quake IV	Activision	Unknown
Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	03 2002
RailSport Challenge	Microsoft	04 2002
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	03 2002
Rise of Nations	Microsoft	02 2003
RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Infogrames	03 2002
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	03 2002
SimCity 4	EA	04 2002
Sims Online	EA	04 2002
Sovereign	Sony	Unknown
Star Trek Starfleet Command III	Activision	04 2002
Star Trek: Elite Force II	Ritual Entertainment	Q1 2003
Star Wars: Jedi Knight II: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	04 2002
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	02 2003
Sudden Strike 2	CDV	08/30/02
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	09/15/02
Team Fortress 2	Sierra	TBA
Terminator 3	Infogrames	03 2002
The Thing	Universal Interactive	08/14/02
Trident III	Eidos	04 2002
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos	01 2003
Trojan 2.0	Monolith	TBA
Unreal II	Infogrames	04 2002
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	03 2002
Virtual Resort: Spring Break	Eidos	03 2002
WarBirds 3	Simon/Schuster	09/03/02
Warlords IV	SSG	03 2002
World of Warcraft	Blizzard	Unknown

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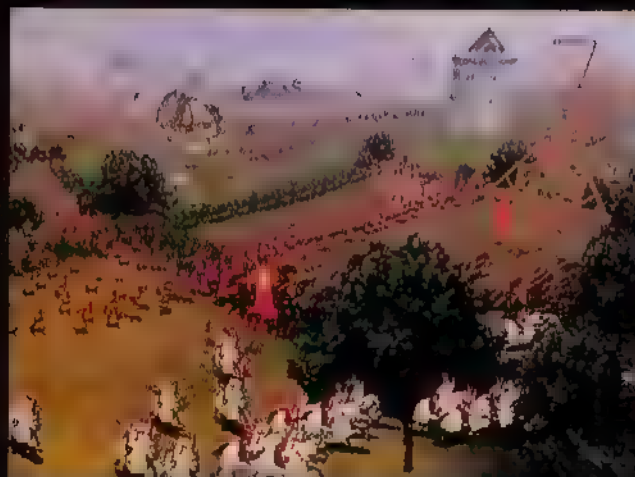
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It's about time strategy/wargames looked this good. A trebuchet and mangonel make short work of a castle wall.



A huge cavalry clash like this would be rare, but it shows off just how powerful the game's engine is.

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL

The spectacular follow-up to *Shogun* is as deep as it is beautiful By

If you've always wanted to play a game that looks like *Braveheart* and plays out like a complex chess game, with all the intrigue and double-crossing of medieval politics, this is it. Combat in *Medieval: Total War* looks like an epic war movie, and it challenges you to win battles the old-fashioned way—by exploiting an enemy's weakness to break his lines and slaughter his men. But it's also a turn-based strategy game that models many of the factors that kept kings up late during the Middle Ages, including diplomacy, religion, gunpowder, morale, leaders' reputations, economics, and the Crusades. It's an enormously ambitious game that will make your blood race when you outsmart an enemy and hack his men to pieces. But it can be equally merciless should you make a mistake or ignore a seemingly minor detail far from the battlefield.

Risk with 10,000 Units

Medieval builds upon the excellent gameplay of its two-year-old predecessor *Shogun: Total War*. As in *Shogun* (and *Risk*), the name of the game is territorial expansion. In the

the screenshots here show, the battles are spectacular affairs that play out like epic war movies with up to 10,000 combatants—at about four times the graphic detail of *Shogun*. If you got tired of *Shogun*'s sameness, *Medieval* features 400 battle maps, including lakes, coasts, rivers, and mountains, across five climate zones (with various weather such as rain, fog, wind, sand, and snow).

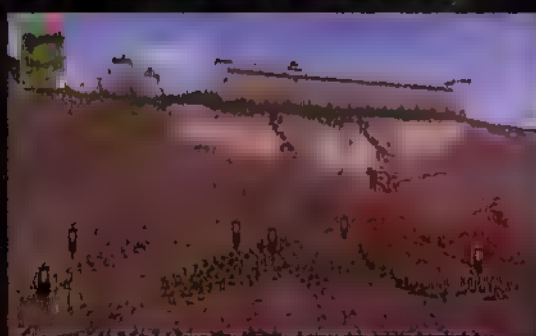
In place of *Shogun*'s single culture, there are 12 playable factions (and a host of nonplayable ones) including the French, English, Spanish, Byzantines, Turks, and Egyptians. Players can try to dominate much or all of Europe, or they can try one of several historical campaigns. The huge strategy map stretches from Ireland to Russia in the north, and from Morocco to "Arabia" (modern-day Jordan) in the south.

Strength and Honor

Many of the units in *Shogun* were quite similar, and names like Naginata, No-dachi, Samurai, Yari, Samurai, and Yari Ashigaru made them harder to distinguish. *Medieval*'s unit mix should be much more intuitive, and has a much larger



The turn-based strategy game is like *Risk* x 100.



There are hundreds of map types to fight on, in different climates, during different seasons, with various types of weather.

Master the art of war and live out your *Braveheart* fantasy.

basic game, you start out with a pseudo-state like Germany with a number of provinces under your control. Provinces generate revenue (florins), which let you build economic improvements, castles, military facilities, and units. Spend too much on improving your economy, and you'll lose militarily. Spend too much on the military, and you'll go broke. This tension between economic, diplomatic, and military considerations only increases throughout the game.

You invade opponents by moving military units into their province. After your turn, you enter the real-time battlefield mode, which is really the highlight of the game. (Battles can be automatically resolved, but you'll lose way more men if you don't take command.) As



GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Creative Assembly
URL: www.totalwar.com
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2002

WAR

Ken Brown



variety, including numerous infantry types, crossbowmen, halberdiers, pikemen, camel riders, and royal knights. There's a new class of unit that includes all those siege weapons we learned about from *Age of Empires*: catapults, ballistae, mangonels, and trabuchets. Then there are the gunpowder siege weapons like cannons and culverins. The siege weapons are very powerful and have a dramatic effect on the battlefield, but they're extremely vulnerable and need to be protected.

Each of the playable factions has unique units, and each religion also has certain types of units based on their historical strength. In addition to the military units, there are a host of strategic units such as emissaries, spies, assassins, priests, cardinals, and inquisitors. There are more than 100 total units in the game, and we would need 10 pages just to describe them all. But in general, strategic units can be used to spy, foment rebellion, bribe enemy leaders, convert the population of a defeated province, or otherwise wreak havoc with your opponents.

Controlled Chaos

Battlefield management was difficult in *Shogun*, so the developers have taken steps to make things easier. They've made it simpler to group units together and assemble them into formation. They've also made it easy to see troop morale by simply moving your cursor over the unit. Descriptions of the unit's morale include "happy that their flank is protected," "worried about so many casualties," "encouraged by the general," and so forth.

Morale is just one of many crucial

factors affecting the outcome.

Terrain, weather, the skill of your general, the proximity of your general to your troops, troop formation, troop experience, and many other factors come into play. You'll want to utilize

the high ground for your archers because their arrows fly farther. Unit facing is modeled, so it pays to attack an enemy's flank or rear. Heavy cavalry can decimate archers but are vulnerable to pikemen. Gunpowder may not work in the rain. You'll have to consider factors like this, be ready to exploit opportunity, and be adept at controlling your units if you want to win. If that sounds hard, it is. Just the tutorials take a couple of hours to play through.

But it does seem easier than in *Shogun* (and there's always Easy mode). And to many, it will be vastly more interesting, since these cultures are much more familiar to average Americans. For those willing to invest the time, *Medieval* will reward players with a breathtaking general's eye view of medieval combat, in a near-limitless variety of permutations, including historical campaigns, custom battles, eight-player multiplayer, and more. And its turn-based strategy adds even more depth and variability to the experience.

If you've always fantasized about being William Wallace, there's never been a better way to do it.

THE FORTUNES OF WAR



For the glory of France, I decided to kick the arrogant English out of Aquitaine. First I allied with the Continental powers, then I married a princess to the neighboring Aragonese (Spanish) to buy the royalty. When I attacked Aquitaine, I was surprised to see the Aragonese had sent many troops to assist me. Although I could not command them, they fought well and bravely and kicked the English hounds back to the sea. Upon hearing word of our victory, the Pope sent word that he was canceling the Church's alliance with England and to strengthen his alliance with France. He also promised covert action against the English.

It had been a profitable action. We contributed 2,100 florins to French coffers for winning Aquitaine, and 400 more for purchasing captured soldiers back to the English.

Two turns later, the fortunes of war had reversed. The formerly friendly Aragonese invaded Aquitaine and defeated my numerically superior force. Then the "neutral" Swiss invaded Burgundy and took it while my attention was focused west. Half of my former allies canceled their treaties with me because they were either allied with Aragon or Switzerland. Bastards!

Quite cunningly, the Swiss then followed with an offer of marriage to a noble princess—to buy my acquiescence to their aggression. Treacherous dogs! They will rot in the fields when we're done having our revenge on the Aragonese!

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P R O J E C T - 1



Violence

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The new tactical combat mode lets you plan your assault. Now you can see what it's like to rain death on your foe with bone trebuchets.



The new graphics engine marries the gameplay of *Warlords* with the perspective and art style of *Warlords Battlecry*.

WARLORDS IV: THE

Cast aside the fallen Hero and welcome back the Warlord By Thierry

Long before any mighty or magical Hero sailed forth, before any Disciple strutted around a map, there was a Warlord. Back in 1990, when others were busy putting the Hubble telescope into space, SSG put out a little fantasy-strategy game called *Warlords*. While there have since been other big entries into the "fantasy hero zips around landscape conquering cities and slaying entire armies" genre, the turn-based *Warlords* franchise has been a bit quiet, with no new releases since the appearance of *Warlords III: Dark Lords Rising* way back in 1997. But if you thought that *Warlords* had become a real-time franchise with *Warlords: Battlemcry I and II*, hang on, because the original turn-based *Warlords* is coming back.

That is, it's coming back with enhancements taken from its real-time sibling. The graphics engine is borrowed from *Battlemcry II*, and as a result, a lot of both the general art and the terrain are brought over. Terrain types include lava, plains, swamp, desert, hills, mountains, and road; from the screenshots, they already look pretty snazzy compared

to zombies. If attacked, it may be knocked down to four zombies. Previously you saw only one unit and a number near it, but now you have better information on the health of a given stack.

Graham also described the new resource model, in which territorial borders play a key part. Each city has a marked radius, and all resources within that radius are automatically grabbed. Also, there is now a city screen that displays all the buildings you have, rather than the former abstract dialog box that listed which units your city could build. The new cities are also upgradable, and each one has a distinct look, as in *Battlemcry II*. There is also a particular building whose sole function is to expand the territorial border of the city, which in turn lets you grab more resources.

The six sides in *Warlords IV* will be Humans, Dwarves, Elves, Undead, Orcs, and Volturians (think demons), with approximately 10 to 15 units per side; each unit can be upgraded over time. Here units are being modeled after those in *Battlemcry II*, and the retinue from *Battlemcry II* is being brought over as well. After each



Over time you can turn a city into a battle metropolis. Now it's better to upgrade a conquered city than turn it down.



Your wayward hero gets quests from shrines like this.

Warlords IV introduces major improvements to the turn-based classic.

to the top-down tile sets of the previous games.

The biggest change to gameplay is the addition of tactical combat. But if you're a really old-school *Warlords* player, you can have combat fall back on autoresolve as in previous games. Producer Garrett Graham commented, "Autoresolve is also useful for multiplayer games, since playing out each battle in a six-player game would kill the pacing." Combat tactics include flanking and rear attacks and the ability to attach a hero to a stack of units, thereby shielding the hero from direct attack and giving the units a combat bonus. In *Warlords IV*, you command stacks of units, not individual ones, so rather than see damaged units, you simply see that the stack has fewer people in it. For example, if a thrall of

scenario, you can select two lieutenants to accompany the hero into battle next time. As in *Battlemcry II*, the single-player campaign will be conducted on a *Risk*-style world map, with randomized territories waiting to be conquered. Of course, there will still be a map editor, a slew of stand-alone scenarios, and a random map generator.

Currently, the team is focusing on creating a well-rounded diplomacy model and making sure the AI maintains the high standards set by the previous games.

The magical fantasy field is still crowded, even with the demise of the once-great *Heroes of Might and Magic*. But it looks like the mix of classic *Warlords* and new-and-improved *Battlemcry* elements will keep *Warlords IV* in gamers' quad games.



Even little buildings like this re-creation of Robert Coffey's jungle gym get lots of loving detail.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft Entertainment
DEVELOPER: SSG Ubi www.ssg.com.au
RELEASE DATE: Winter 2002

PROES OF ETHERIA





The

Flak

is

Back


Unreal Tournament 2003

BY TOM PRICE

Unreal Tournament
2003 re-creates that
UT magic, and takes
the graphics to a
whole new plane

Unreal Tournament 2003

Who says cool Hell levels are for Quake gamers only? Motig, our favorite Gen Mo'kal warrior—seen here and in the opener—sure doesn't think so.

 There're two things you need to know about Unreal Tournament 2003. One, it's the sequel to CGW's 1999 Game of the Year and one of the best first-person shooters of all time. Two, it represents the next big step in 3D graphics, taking full advantage of the latest technology. It's also going to keep you from getting a tan this summer, since you'll be staying indoors day after day to play it. Wait, that's three things. Sorry, my brain's firing scattershot these days.

That's because UT2003, or at least a fairly late beta version of it, is on my PC right now as I write this. It has been for at least a week. I'm not trying to rub it in or anything, but access to games before they ship to the public is one of the absolute highlights of my job (along with the yearly sojourn to E3 and near unlimited access to one of the most powerful databases of useless information on the planet, Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen).

Even though my assignment is technically to write an in-depth hands-on preview (not a review), I don't think I'll be able to suppress my opinion of the game so far. Because, it's simply the most amazing thing I've seen on my monitor since...well, I'm really not sure.

Of course the first thing I did once the code got here was start up a quick deathmatch against UT's notorious bots. The first map I played, Antalus, didn't disappoint at all. One of the few brightly lit outdoor maps, Antalus shows off a whole series of cool graphical touches that didn't seem possible a couple of years ago when the original UT's graphics wowed us so thoroughly. Every needle on the big bushy coniferous trees stands out against the sky, and the tree's shadow gently sways back and forth along the ground. Looking more closely, I realized the shadows were moving across my gun model, as well as all of the player models.

You've gotta hand it to Epic. They've programmed the most impressive-looking graphics engine currently available, and brought to gamers the software that will finally show off all the amazing advancements made possible by GeForce3 and 4 cards. Cliff and the gang pulled out all the stops on this one,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

Scooter's favorite yellow robot defends one of his team's capture points in Double Domination.

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Shadow of Destiny™



Animated Violence



but they can't take sole credit. Digital Extremes must be commended for creating one of the most visually fascinating worlds ever seen in a computer game. With an almost limitless palette at their disposal, the artists and level designers at DE have created a vibrant yet moody world, alive with swaying shadows, steam-spewing vents, breathing walls, pulsing lights, and flowing liquids. Screenshots just don't do it justice.

Amazingly, the levels and characters manage to evoke the mood and feel of the previous *Unreal* games while being totally new and original. The maps are as varied from one another as possible and range in environments from techno-punk interiors to weird alien exteriors. You'll want to run around the levels without enemies just to enjoy all the little touches. *UT2003* is as much of an artistic achievement as a technological one.

What in the Wide Wide World of Sports Is Goin' On Here?

UT2003 follows the same basic premise of the original *UT*: You're a competitor in a futuristic sporting league that pits players against one another in weapons-laden arenas. Kind of like *Thunderzone*, but with teamwork, *UT2003* plays up the sports angle quite a bit more, though, with a single-player campaign that puts you in control of a team of competitors, each with unique skills and attributes that will change over time. Just like in the real world of professional sports, your players earn money based on their performance. You even have a salary cap to manage. If you're disappointed with a player's production, you can just fire him or her or it.

Focusing on the sports element of *UT* was a key design decision. "Basically, we wanted to give the single-player game as much of a multiplayer feel as possible," explains Digital Extremes creative director and founder James Schmalz. "Hopefully taking the coolest elements of playing online and bringing them to the single player experience make it less of a training area and more of a multiplayer competition. That way people will be that much more enticed to play online after playing the single-player game."

Name Your Game

UT did a great job of letting the gamer jump right in and play a game, either against bots or other humans, over a LAN or the Internet. The game types were so solid, and the volume of maps and mutators available made for a nearly endless gaming experience. *UT2003* is no different. There's one less game type this time around, but the sense of never-ending gameplay hasn't been diminished in the least.

In addition to the standard Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and Capture the Flag games, *UT2003* replaces the old and unpopular Domination with Double Domination, removes the popular Assault game mode and adds the sports-themed Bombing Run. Assault was one of my favorite game types, but I understand why it was taken out. As Schmalz explains, "Assault, as popular as it was with many people, didn't really fit into the mold of *UT2003*, which has a more sporty, team-based feel. As cool as it is though, we hope the mod community jumps on it and makes some incredible Assault mods!" Here's to that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

Happiness is a Warm Minigun

What really separates first-person shooters are their weapons. Fanboys not only pledge allegiance to a certain game, they'll even pledge allegiance to a certain kind of rocket bouncer. The original lineup of guns in *Unreal Tournament*, and their clever secondary firing modes, helped bring gamers back again and again. Here's what's in store this time in *UT2003*.



LIGHTNING GUN

Replaces the sniper rifle. Pretty similar, except now you can see who's shooting at you with thanks to sweet procedural lighting effects.



TRANSLOCATOR

Just like the original personal telepresence device, but with the added feature of being able to see who's shooting at you with thanks to sweet procedural lighting effects.



LINK GUN

Replaces the shotgun. Pretty similar, except now you can see who's shooting at you with thanks to sweet procedural lighting effects.



SHOCK RIFLE

Replaces the assault rifle. Pretty similar, except now you can see who's shooting at you with thanks to sweet procedural lighting effects.

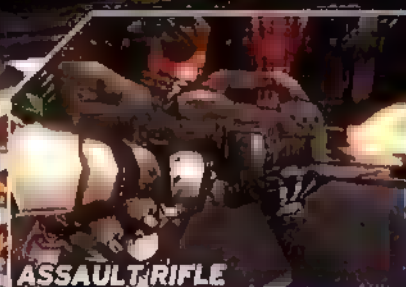
MINIGUN

The main difference between the new and old minigun is in the primary/secondary fires. They've been flipped. In addition, the rounds fired from secondary are explosive rounds that have a small splash damage radius.



SHIELDGUN

Replaces the impact hammer. Primary fire incorporates all of the original weapons' capabilities, but secondary fire puts up a shield that deflects some shots back at the attacker but drains energy at the same time.



ASSAULT RIFLE

Replaces the enforcer. The double enforcer was one of my favorite weapons in UT, but this is an obvious upgrade. Faster rate of fire, better damage, and a grenade on the secondary fire make this a much more sufficient default weapon.



BLORIFLE

The developers originally intended to leave the blorifle out of UT2003, but overwhelming fan support for the "goo gun" brought it back. And it's fun to say "I just killed Goo! Chm wkt same-same!"



ROCKET LAUNCHER

The rocket launcher has been significantly simplified from its earlier incarnation as an overwhelmingly powerful and unbalanced room-warmer. Now you can only load up three shots more powerful rockets at a time. You can no longer lock onto a target.



TAG RIFLE

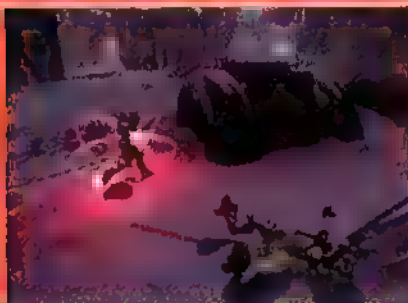
Replaces the redeemer on certain levels and acts as a targeting laser for a satellite-launched energy weapon. Oh sweet redeemer, why have you been taken away? Actually, the TAG rifle pecks just as big a wallop, and it even leaves a charred skeleton where players were caught up in the blast.



FLAK CANNON

Ah, the good ol' flak cannon. They wouldn't screw with that. There are some pretty trials coming off the individual flak bits, which would look really cool on shrooms, but we don't condone that kind of behavior.

Unreal Tournament 2003



The different game types are what makes UT2003 so impressive. From the familiar CTF mode (right) to the new and innovative Bombing Run (above), UT2003's game types are driven by the superb gameplay and brain-meltingly



While I'll miss Assault, Double Domination improves upon its successor so much, and creates such a great game of strategy, timing, and teamwork, that it may be my new favorite mode. In DD, there are two capture points, and for a team to score a point they must hold both positions for a continuous 10 seconds. This is a lot harder than it sounds, and makes for some great seesaw action as teams are either trying to break up the other team's stronghold on the points or conversely trying to achieve that stronghold. The tide of battle can turn on a dime.

The same can be said for Bombing Run, it's kind of an amplified version of football, but imagine that the linebackers have rocket launchers. Two teams start out in their respec-

tive bases, which house a goal that they must protect. Midway between the two bases is a "ball," which can be possessed by only one player at a time, and that player can't use any weapons while he has the ball (although he can do lateral the ball to teammates).

The ball carrier must get the ball to the goal inside the other team's base while his teammates light off defenders. The football theme of this game type is capped off by the fact that you get 7 points per score (no field goals though).

I Want to Fall Asleep and Wake Up When the Game Goes Gold

Playing this beta of UT2003 has done exactly

what I was worried it would do. It's just fed the fire in my belly that wants this game so bad. It's funny, too—since Epic, DE, and Inlogrames did such a good job of keeping this game under wraps for so long, the hype machine didn't even really exist before six months ago. We were too busy getting excited over *Unreal II* (oh jeez, don't even get me started on that game) to even worry about the next *UT*. But the genie is out of the bottle now, and take it from us, you should be very excited, too. And you should also be saving up money for a GeForce3. Oh and go outside and enjoy a little bit of summer, because once *UT2003* shows up in stores, you'll be stuck in front of your PC like a deer in the headlights.

Deja Vu All Over Again

Beja Vu Over Again! *Beja Vu* is back, and this time it's a whole new experience. The game is now available on the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. The game is a first-person shooter, and it's a sequel to the original *Beja Vu*. The game is set in a futuristic world, and it's a story of a man who is trying to save the world. The game is a great example of a first-person shooter, and it's a must-play for anyone who loves the genre. The game is available on the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. The game is a great example of a first-person shooter, and it's a must-play for anyone who loves the genre. The game is available on the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. The game is a great example of a first-person shooter, and it's a must-play for anyone who loves the genre.



Urban Towers



Unreal Tournament



Unreal Tournament



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Unreal Tournament 2003



UnrealEd Evolved

Looking at the number of mods, total conversions, and mutators that appear steadily for *Unreal Tournament*, you'd never guess the game was released in 1999. The dev team understands completely that the long-term success of *UT2003* depends a great deal on the mod community, and every copy of the new game will come with the same ed for they used to create all the levels.

The new editing tools are based on the original UnrealEd software but are designed to be user-friendly and are packed with more features. The most interesting addition is the Matinee camera editing system, which allows for the easy creation of scripted and in-game cinematic sequences. "You can place camera nodes and smoothly interpolate between them, do instant cuts between them, or whatever variant you choose from the list," says *UT2003* level designer Alan Wilard. Matinee also provides tools that let bots and other objects dynamically interact with the camera, triggering animations, aggressive AI behavior, or other actions exactly when you want them to happen.

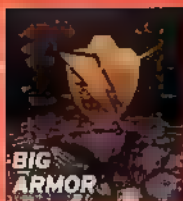
The screenshots for *UT2003* show off some insanely detailed outdoor environments, and editing terrain is as simple as selecting a starting resolution, applying a base texture, and then "painting" everything from varying terrain heights to transparencies into the environment. This is accomplished by using tools reminiscent of those found in graphic-editing packages like Photoshop. Several texture layers can be applied and blended into the terrain as well, allowing for natural-looking patches of grass or dirt that seamlessly interconnect.

A powerful particle effect tool also is new to this edition of UnrealEd. Whether you're creating sparks, dust clouds, or any other particles, special menus allow for complete control. "You can do things like change the color of a particle over time, change the size, and randomize almost any value from velocity to lifetime to scale," Wilard says.

For someone who has previous experience using the UnrealEd we ship with *UT*, it will be a very linear process to learn the new tools, Wilard promises. That reduced learning curve means we should see a flood of new content from the mod community almost immediately after *UT2003* is released. Here's hoping *UT2003* can ride the wave as long as its storied predecessor has. —T. Byrl Baker

Goodies to Go

The gameplay of fast-paced shooters like *Unreal* and *Quake* depends on you being able to do some things you'd never do in real life, like carry a dozen weapons at once, or jump 100 feet in the air or a jump that lands without telescoping your legs into your body. But mainly you need to be able to do things like heal yourself on the fly or pick up some extra armor. *UT* had a whole host of items to accomplish these tasks, but *UT2003* has streamlined it all. Here's a look at some of the items you'll be damn glad to find in the game.



BIG ARMOR



BIG HEALTH

These are the *puhunkadunk* power-ups that you see only once per level. Worth 100 armor and 100 health, respectively.



REGULAR ARMOR



REGULAR HEALTH

Thankfully, these are the standard items you'll find in the game.



DAMAGE AMPLIFIER

Especially when combined with the minigun, the damage done by each projectile, but only

Damarus, another one of our favorite Gen Mo'kai, gets busy with the assault rifle. The Gen Mo'kai are just one of the six groups of combatants including humans, cybernetic humans, robots, homo sapiens medusae (freaks, really), and big ugly Russian chicks in full body armor.





Adrenaline: It Gives You Wings

UT2003 features a new power-up system to replace some of those more obscure items from UT like invisibility, and not only give players new abilities, but also the option of when to use said abilities in a match. Scattered around the maps are little capsules of adrenaline. Once you've acquired 100 points of adrenaline you can execute one of the following special modes by entering its corresponding key combination:

BERSERK

Forward, forward, forward, forward
Your weapons do more damage

DEFENSE

Back, back, back, back
Your health is maxed out and you
get an armor boost

INVISIBILITY

Left, left, right, right
Makes you invisible. Oooh

SPEED AND JUMP BOOST

Back, back, forward, forward
Makes you run faster and jump
higher. Although double-jump can be
executed at any time regardless of
adrenaline

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Reviews

We love games, we hate games Edited by Robert Coffey

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Grand Theft Auto III

How Do We Rate?

We review only finished games—no betas, no patches



OUTSTANDING

The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.

VERY GOOD

Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

AVERAGE

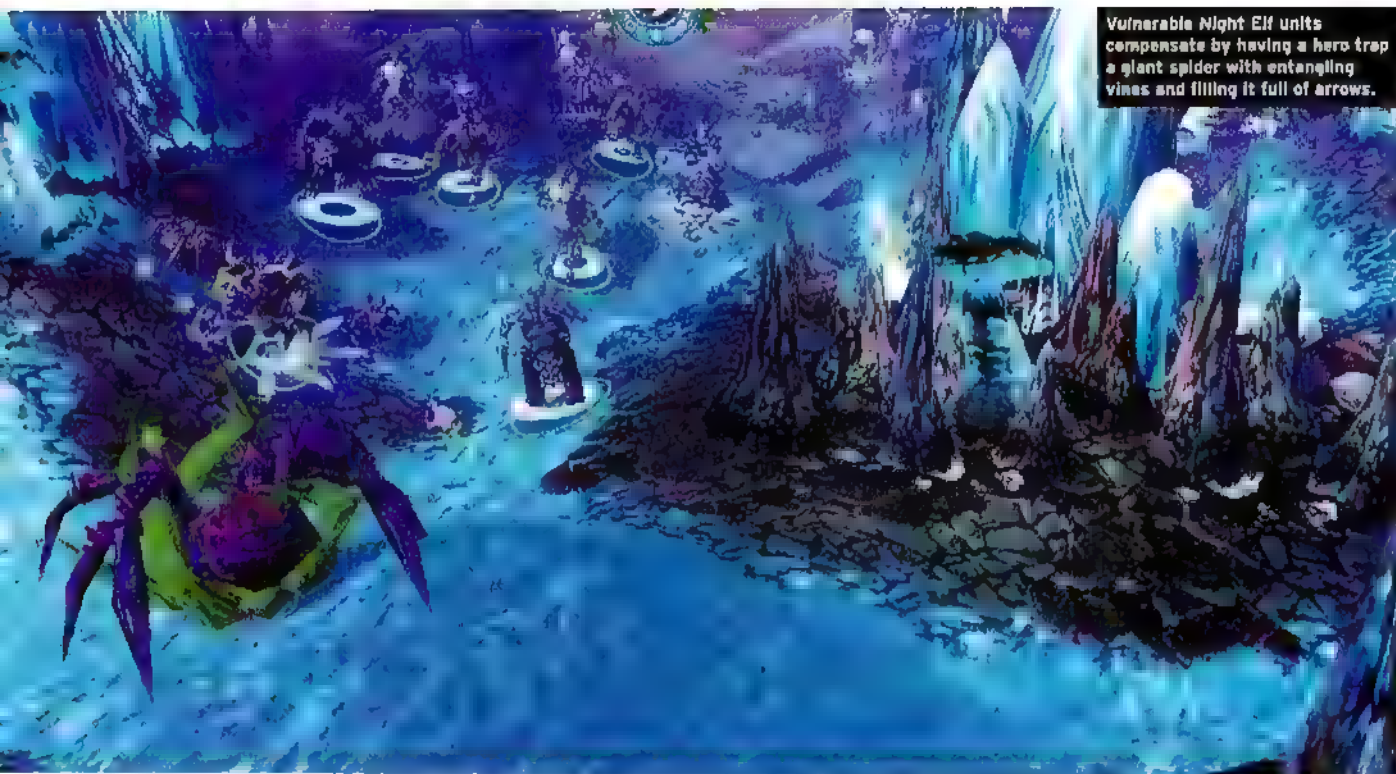
Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

WEAK

Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

ABYSMAL

The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.



Vulnerable Night Elf units compensate by having a hero trap a giant spider with entangling vines and filling it full of arrows.

WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos

Orcs vs. Humans vs. intensity By Robert Coffey

PUBLISHER Vivendi
UNIVERSAL DEVELOPER
Blizzard **GENRE** Real-time
strategy
URL www.blizzard.com
ESRB RATINGS Teen, blood,
violence **PRICE** \$59.00

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III
400, 128MB RAM,
700MB hard drive
SPACE RECOMMENDED
REQUIREMENTS Pentium II
600, 256MB RAM,
322MB 3D card
MULTIPLAYER LAN, Internet
(2-12 players)

I have never played a game more polished than *WarCraft III*. I have never played a game more determined and willing to strive for innovation while sticking doggedly to past successes than *WarCraft III*. I have never played a game that more truly incorporated a great storyline into RTS gameplay than *WarCraft III*. And I have never been more confused, befuddled, and absolutely rudderless about how I felt about a game than I have with *WarCraft III*. It's been days since I finished the huge single-player campaign and I'm still vacillating somewhere between thrilled and maybe a little bit let down.

My God, how did I get *here*?

Part One: The Obvious

WarCraft III is the third installment of one of the most beloved RTS series ever. Throw in that the game comes from Blizzard, the certified gaming geniuses behind two other fairly popular franchises (you might have heard of them; they're called *Diablo* and *StarCraft*) and you've got a little that defines the press-release cliché "hotly anticipated." Come release day, the floors of every EB in the nation were ankle-deep in foam from the slaving

hordes of gamers eager to get their hands on a copy.

Expectations were, as they say, great.

And what were those expectations? Well, for the last couple of years Blizzard has been promising an RTS game in which the special hero units would matter, where you'd want to use them because they made a huge difference. They guaranteed four unique playable races. They vowed to inhibit the rushing strategies that ruined multiplayer gaming. They told gamers that they would seamlessly add RPG elements and a riveting storyline that would enrich every mission in the single-player campaign. And everyone assumed Blizzard's first foray into 3D would look amazing.

And they have done all of that. The four races are beautifully balanced, possessed of unique personalities and strategies. It's phenomenal that Blizzard found a way to keep the playing field level with such a disparate mix: the Night Elves' inexpensive stealthy units, some of which can shapeshift depending on your combat needs, the vicious hordes of the expansionist Undead; the sturdy and steady Humans; and the brute force of the Orcs, whose heroes have some of the most powerful special

attacks in the game.

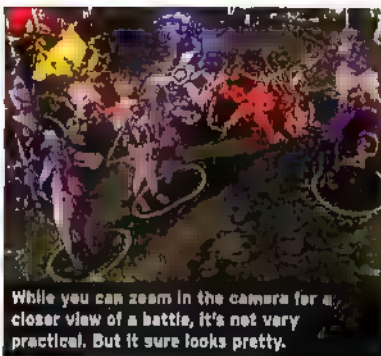
The heroes are the deciding factor in almost every battle, unleashing devastating attacks, providing crucial buffs to their units, or summoning new forces to turn the tide. A new Upkeep feature basically taxes players who build up large forces, thus severely inhibiting rushing—you can still amass a large army but your gold production will diminish as you grow from no upkeep to low upkeep to high upkeep. No RTS has done a better job of blending story and mission structure; in-engine cutscenes aren't just excuses for the next scenario like in every other RTS, they logically set up every action, frequently midmission. The effect is a sense of being on an epic quest, where your actions in the game world are a part of, and not peripheral to, the typically captivating Blizzard story that turns upon the introduction/return of the demonic Burning Legion to the world of *WarCraft*.

And, man alive, does it look great. From the corrupted forests to the sun-blasted wastelands to the snowy wilderness, the environments are visually rich and alive, as is every unit and hero, and





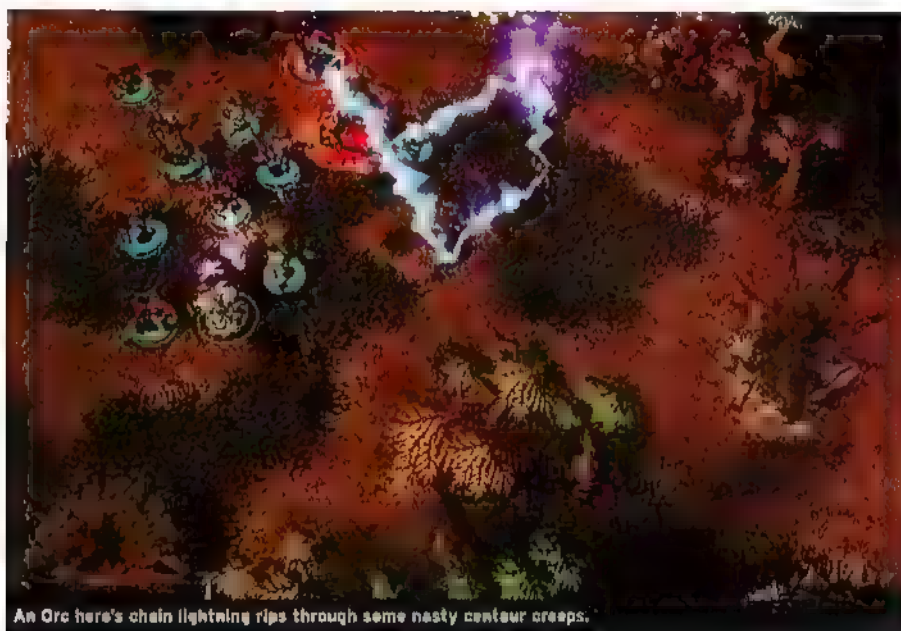
New to Warcraft are the Taurans who ally with the new and improved peace-loving Orcs.



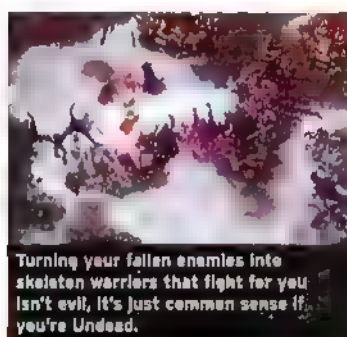
While you can zoom in the camera for a closer view of a battle, it's not very practical. But it sure looks pretty.



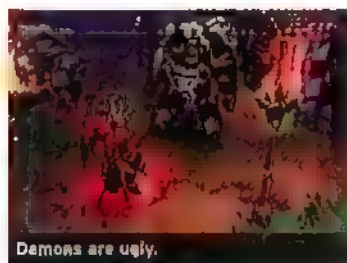
Motionless Night Elf units are invisible at night—perfect for negotiating the darkness of this subterranean dungeon.



An Orc here's chain lightning rips through some nasty centaur creeps.



Turning your fallen enemies into skeleton warriors that fight for you isn't evil, it's just common sense if you're Undead.



Demons are ugly.

the rendered cinematics are spectacular. The interface is perfect and the voice work is top-notch, steeped in Blizzard's trademark humor (my favorites: the Goblin Zeppelin that shrieks like Beavis and the Human mortar teams that belch "Mortar Kombal!"). Every element of the game shows such perfectionist care you'd swear someone took a chainsaw and literally polished every polygon and pixel in the game.

Bottom line: Blizzard delivered as promised, and then some.

But I wasn't floored. Not even close.

Part Two: I Question My Sanity

So what was wrong with me? Why was I not riveted to a game I'd been anticipating as much as the next gamer? Why was I not shivering with excitement

units, run away and heal, come back, and just gradually chip away until I won and moved on to the next scenario. But after completing the Human campaign, then the Undead campaign, and driving halfway through the Orc campaign I realized that the game was long past

Blizzard delivered as promised, and then some. But I wasn't floored. Not even close.

through one desperately pitched battle after another? Why was I only having a moderate amount of fun?

Well, for starters, there aren't many pitched battles. Initially I blamed the flatness of the conflict on the game's learning curve—like other RTS games, *WarCraft III* eases you into the game, introducing new units and gameplay elements gradually. Still, the enemy AI seemed perfectly content to run intermittent hit and run harassment sorties against my bases while I could run a force up to the enemy base, take out a few structures and

tutoring me—with few exceptions, it was just waiting for me. Bumping the difficulty up to Hard resulted in a more aggressive AI, one that rebuilt razed structures, but why doesn't the Normal setting present a more moderate version of Hard's stiff challenge? There are a few missions that stand out: one human mission in which you race to kill 100 villagers before they turn into zombies, a few timed missions that have you fend off larger and larger waves of attackers, and a stealth mission that has you slip a lone Night Elf hero past the demons patrolling the map.





Ironically, I think it's Blizzard's successfully executed game design that saps much of the single-player game of its intensity. Further, your crucial hero units need to gain experience to enhance their abilities and they need to collect special items to augment them even further (each hero can hold up to six items which can be single-use spell scrolls or items that confer bonuses). In order to buff up your heroes, you'll need to perform side quests and battle "creeps," monsters placed on the map that typically guard items or resources. To do this you need time. And so the game very considerably gives it to you, and that patience takes away a lot of the urgency gamers look for in an RTS.

Part Three: I Role-Play Instead

Still, I found thrills in the game—only I was playing an RPG when I found them. Unlike every other supposed RTS ever made, the non-production missions in *WarCraft III* are outstanding and a real highlight. Leading a band of Night Elves through an underground prison to free an imprisoned hero focused on small party tactics right out of *Dungeon Siege* or *Diablo*, complete with the faulty RPG game logic that hides potions and talismans in crates scattered through prison hallways.

Classic RPG decisions further the role-playing part of the game. Which item do you drop from your full inventory when you find those +9 Claws of Attack?

When your hero levels up, do you increase your defensive shields or go for that nifty resurrection spell?

Part Four: I Come Full Circle

Thank God for multi-player. It's in *WarCraft III*'s multiplayer and skirmish action that the game really shines, if only because using a battle probably means your enemy—be it human or a happily merciless AI—is going to charge into your base and wipe you out. Unlike the single-player game, it's tense, it's devious, and it's constantly riveting and involving. I can't imagine anyone not loving it. Understand, it still plays slower than *StarCraft* since you still have to take the time to build up a worthy hero. Also, the upkeep onus and a tough 90-unit cap limit your forces so you'll have to balance offensive and defensive forces carefully. But this game is going to dominate online play for years—maybe we should think of the single-player as a massive tutorial for the next few years of online conflict.

WarCraft III is a really good game. It's just not an incredible game.

VERDICT ★★★★★

It's a very good game, but *WarCraft III* could have used less game design and more excitement.

The Sum of All Fears

Where tac sim = tactically
simpliminded By **Chou Chou**

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Red Storm Games
Tactical shooter: Ubi
sumofallfears.ubi.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; violence
PRICE: \$29.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III
450, 128MB RAM,
16MB 3D card, 1GB
hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS:
Pentium III 600, 32MB
3D card, MULTIPAYER LAN,
Internet (2-36 players)

If you're thinking about picking up *The Sum of All Fears* for all the hijinks of the CIA buddy flick of the same name, you'd better think again. What you get instead is a dummed-down *Rogue Spear* running on the *Ghost Recon* engine. *Rainbow Six* fans pining for new gameplay twists and a visually stunning update to their favorite tactical sim should wait for *Raven Shield* to get their proper fix. There's nothing in *TSOAF* you haven't already seen; in fact, there's a lot less here than what I expected. So what went wrong?

Running in parallel to the plot from the

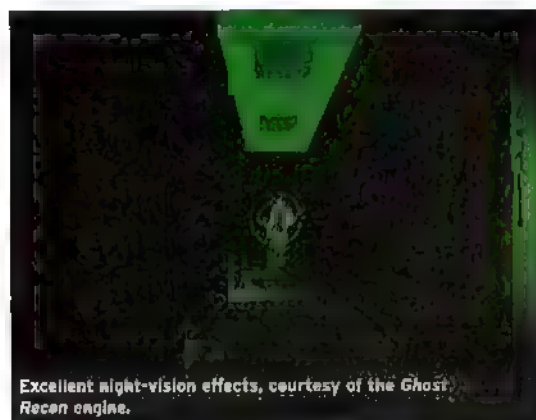


Thank God for J[V(aD)V]uPPeT. Thank God.

There's a lot less here than expected. What went wrong?



That is the biggest bathroom-stall door we've ever seen.



Excellent night-vision effects, courtesy of the *Ghost Recon* engine.

movie, the game focuses on a team of covert military operators who handle all the tasty bits behind the scenes enforcing that we saw little of in the film. The single player campaign sends you out on 11 missions, each sporting familiar goals from rescuing hostages and retrieving data to laying down the smack on an enemy compound. But unlike Red Storm's previous tactical shooters, where it's not uncommon to spend hours perfecting the best laid plans of mice and men, *TSOAF* is shockingly straightforward. Absorb the briefing, choose from a list of prebundled gear or "kits," and off you go. Look ma, no strategizing!

All this de-evolution for the sake of enticing newcomers to an otherwise daunting genre would be forgivable if the AI didn't constantly make stupid mistakes. Some of the military blunders I saw included catching friendly fire from teammates because I happened to be in their line-of-sight; teammates getting stuck on furniture, sharp corners, and doorways to become projectile-fodder; and the same teammates throwing a flashbang at the back of my head while clearing a room, obliterating any initiative we may have had. With AI this dysfunctional, your lovable squad mates become nothing more than a liability.

Lucky, your enemies aren't much brighter. They can spot you from across the map, yet they sometimes have trouble hearing a door creak behind them or the crack of a missed sniper shot whizzing by their heads. Plus, they rarely stray from their prescribed paths, making every sort of a tedious exercise in



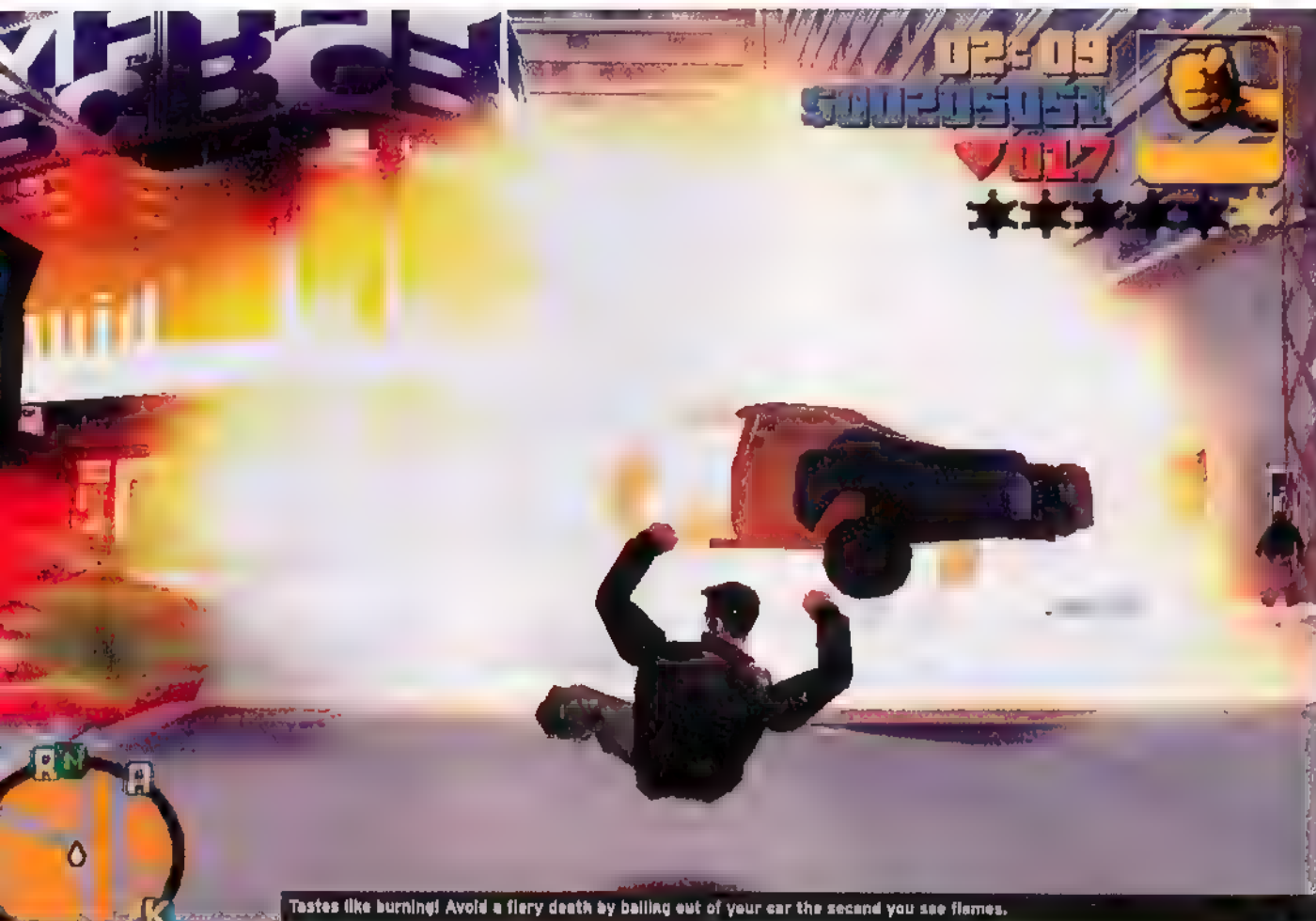
JungleSoulJA steps to admire the beautiful African weave.

trial and error. The game fares much better in its alternate Firefight and LoneWolf modes, where you forego mission goals in lieu of all-out combat.

When the AI wasn't pissing me off, *TSOAF* had its moments. Visually, the *Ghost Recon* engine does a great job of rendering complex indoor environments that run on even the most modest systems. Likewise, the 3D models for players, enemies, and firearms are nicely detailed. Even more surprising is that *TSOAF* is actually a lot of fun in multiplayer—but nobody seems all that interested. At the time of this writing, there's about a hundred players online at any moment. It's easy enough to find a game, but just don't expect anything approaching *Counter-Strike* levels of online popularity. As an entry-level tactical shooter, *TSOAF* has enough to tide over novices, even with its AI problems. But all you tactical-sim-heads will want to skip this sucker and save your ammo for better titles on the horizon.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Not quite *Rogue Spear*; not even close to *Counter-Strike*.



Tastes like burning! Avoid a fiery death by bailing out of your car the second you see flames.

Grand Theft Auto III

Keep that pimp-hand strong! By William O'Neal



PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North

GENRE: Action

URL: www.rockstargames.com

ESRB RATING: Mature; blood,

violence, strong language

PRICE: \$49.99

REQUIREMENTS: PIII 450,

64MB RAM, 16MB

Direct3D video card,

500MB hard drive space

RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PIII 700,

128MB RAM, 32MB

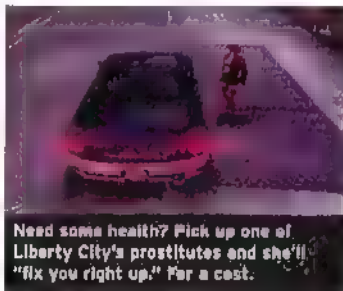
Direct3D video card

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None

Writing a review of *Grand Theft Auto III* for the PC is in many ways pointless. Everyone and their mother has heard of the game and knows what it's about; furthermore, it's pretty much a direct port of the PS2 game that was released last year. That said, however, I still feel compelled to go on.

For all the hype that this series has generated, it's easy to see that *GTA3* is the crack cocaine of gaming: You know it's bad for you, but you keep using it nonetheless. I mean, what is there not to like about a game that prompts a reviewer to ask his managing editor, "Which is the proper plural of ho: hos or hoes?"

For the three people out there who don't know what *GTA3* is, here's the short and sweet. You're an escaped prisoner who finds himself in the thankfully fictional world of Liberty City. Not a family-friendly place, Liberty City is rife with organized crime: gangs, dirty cops,



Need some health? Pick up one of Liberty City's prostitutes and she'll "fix you right up." For a cost.

pimps, hos, and construction workers. In *Daisy Dukes* who keep quoting lines from Village People songs. Hmm... *GTA3* is often described as an action game, but the more you play it, the more it feels like an RPG (sans the Dwarves, Elves, and Necromancers that Jeff Green loves so much). To this end, your goal is to rise up in Liberty City's crime circle by doing odd jobs for the various mob bosses for cash.

GTA3 consists of about 50 primary



When you're done with her, you can kill her and get your money back.

missions—and when you include the side missions you're looking at more like 100. While *GTA3* isn't the best looking game in the world, its gameplay is so awesome that you won't be content to burn through it just once: in fact, it's the kind of title that only gets better with subsequent playings. *GTA3*'s missions invariably involve some sort of driving: everything from delivering hos to "clients" or carjacking an armored car, to driving a



Uh oh—the cops. Cause enough mayhem and destruction and justice will be served. As your Wanted level goes up (the stars in the upper-right corner), the dragnet gets more intense, with roadblocks, SWAT vans, helicopters, and eventually the military and FBI.



Pass a mission, get pizadi



Wrong neighborhood for a walk.

MP3 Player that lets you play your own music once it's been added to the appropriate folder. Speaking of things PC, if you're running Windows XP, you'll encounter a bug that disables text in the menus and in the game. Thankfully, there's a fix that you can download from Microsoft. And while there were rumors prior to the game's release about some possible multiplayer capabilities, the PC version of GTA3, like the PS2 version, is single-player only.

As a straight PS2 port, GTA3 doesn't push the technological envelope graphically. However, there are some things that help to immerse you in the world of Liberty City; the sun rises and sets every day and there are weather changes. Also, Rockstar Games enlisted the help of real-life actors Michael Rappaport, Kyle MacLachlan, Debi Mazar, Joe Pantoliano, and Robert Loggia to make the game feel like an actual gangster movie.

Despite fear of incurring the wrath of gamers everywhere, I'll go out on a limb and liken GTA3 to another (not very pretty game) that you can play over and over again: *Half-Life*. Both show us that there's more to making a good game than eye candy. With a good story, compelling subplots, and the chance to kill everything from pimps to FBI agents, it's safe to say that GTA3 is \$50 well spent.

VERDICT ★★★★★

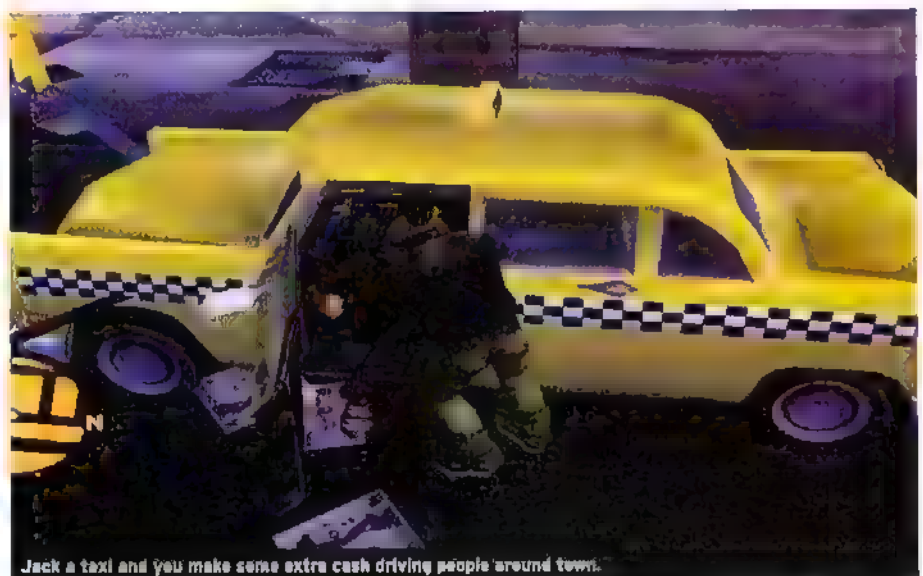
What is there not to like about a game that lets you get health by having sex with prostitutes?

limo chock full of mob bosses.

Where the game's replayability comes in is when you consider the myriad ways that you can complete each mission. For instance, one of the game's early missions involves destroying three laundry trucks that are owned by the Triads. In the beginning of this mission you're given grenades to help you along, but you can satisfy the mission goals by pushing the trucks into the water, ramming them until they blow up, blowing them up with grenades, or stealing the trucks and destroying them by running into things. In other words, GTA3 doesn't care how you complete the missions, as long as you complete them, and missions that involve killing people offer the same type of open-endedness.

While GTA3 is pretty much a direct port of the PS2 version, there are some enhancements that PC gamers will experience that their more technologically challenged console brethren will miss out on, like resolutions higher than a wofu: 640x480 and the awesome ability to play your own MP3s while driving around. All the cars in the game are fitted with radios—everything from techno to talk radio—and there's a special station called

GTA3 is the crack cocaine of gaming: You know it's bad for you, but you keep using it.



Jack a taxi and you make some extra cash driving people around town.

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—Computer Gaming World



"...guaranteed to give you plenty of gameplay hours and fun."

—IGN PC



"Perfect game balance; fantastic AI; strong individual hero development; good tutorial... an absolute must have for fans of the real-time strategy genre."

—PC Gamer



"...the definitive real time strategy game."

—Computer Games



"...everything you could want in a real-time strategy."

—PC Strategy Gamer

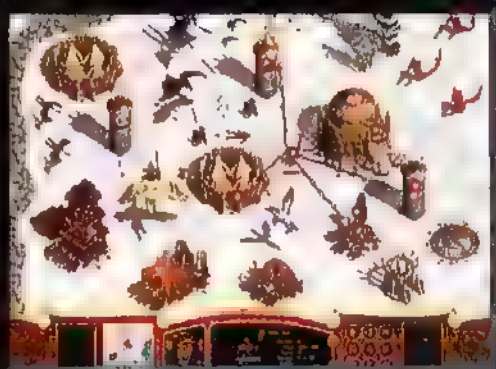


BLOOD
VIOLENCE

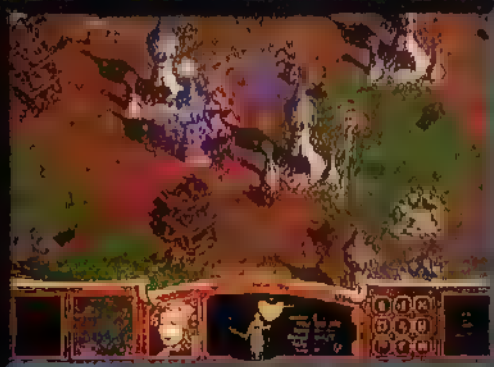
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It wouldn't be a shooter without an end boss would it? Of course you can't just shoot this thing down with a rocket. You gotta hammer on the engines, then snipe the pilot.

Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix

Too much guts, not enough glory By Tom Price

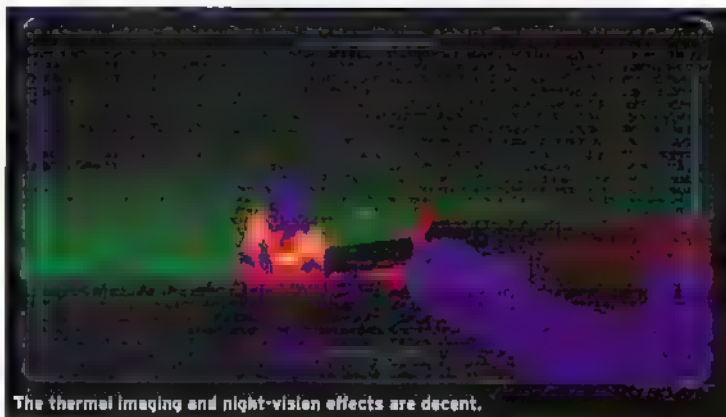
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Raven Games
GENRE: Action
URL: www.ravensoft.com/soldier2.html
ESRB RATING: Mature; blood and gore, violence
PRICE: \$55.00

REQUIREMENTS: PIII 450,
128MB RAM, 1.3GB hard
drive space, 16MB video
card
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PIII
650, 256MB RAM,
32MB video card
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT:
LAN/Internet (2-32)

Before you write in and tell me I'm wrong for not liking this game because, 'Dude, it debuted at No. 1 on the sales charts and that many people can't be wrong,' please keep one thing in mind. *Scooby Doo* made almost \$60 million in its opening weekend, so yes, that many people can be wrong.

I gotta think that many people must be wrong about *Soldier of Fortune II*, because I can't believe that many people would shell out \$55 for a terrible single-player story slapped onto serviceable gameplay with some nice multiplayer touches thrown in. Maybe that many people want to experience the appropriately named GHOUL 2 technology and its ability to provide "more pulse-pounding action than ever before—with 36 damage zones and 16 dismemberment zones!" Yay!

Soldier of Fortune II seems like an aberration coming from Raven, the same



The thermal imaging and night-vision effects are decent.

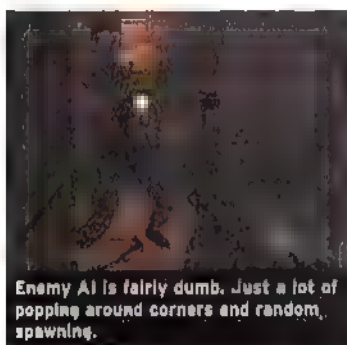
people who just brought us the excellent, and also *Quake III*-based, *Jedi Knight II*. What the hell happened? *SOF2*'s single player is a poorly executed morass of tired FPS clichés and tedious level design. I felt much the same way

about the first *SOF* game, but in hindsight I think I might have liked that game better.

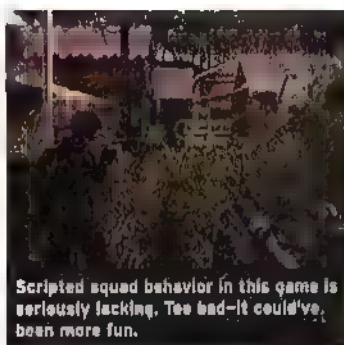
Like most other action games out there with a single-player campaign, especially first-person shooters, *SOF2* tries to be



One of the rail shooting segments involves you and this huay and what's supposed to be the jungle.



Enemy AI is fairly dumb. Just a lot of popping around corners and random spawning.



Scripted squad behavior in this game is seriously lacking. Too bad—it could've been more fun.

cinematic in the presentation of its hackneyed plot. The game begins with an extended sequence of you riding in a car while a voice overloads you with a bunch of useless background information. Don't bother paying attention, it won't really help you get through the game, nor will it engage you in any way. The rest of the game is also peppered with dull stretches like this. Anyone who can make it all the way through without nodding off deserves a cookie.

That's not to say the actual action will keep you up till quarter to three every night. The pace is very uneven, with just barely interesting sequences—the shootout in the hospital, for instance—getting sandwiched between long, boring stretches of room after room filled with bad guys waiting to be slaughtered. The stealth element is paid less than lip service—crawl behind brush for cover in Colombia and the bad guys can still see you.

Sometimes the level design is so poor and your objectives are so unclear that the designers had to resort to some questionable devices. For instance, occasionally you hear your own character make suggestions (i.e., "Maybe we should look over there") because

there's no other way you're going to find your way out of the room.

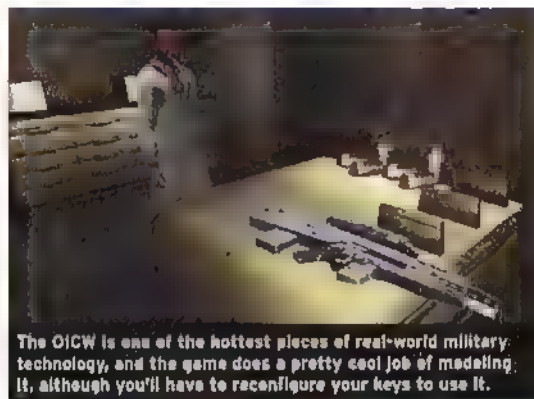
Worse, in the Colombia levels, you're under a ridiculous mandate that if you leave the squad you're with, even if you're just trying to give them side cover or get a better firing line, they'll kill you. Yeah, I'm sure that happens all the time in the field; a seasoned commando getting killed by a squad of Marines. Note to game developers: If you can't think of a decent way to handle scripted teammates (like, say, in the first level of *Medal of Honor*), it's not OK to come up with an unbelievable plot point to compensate.

The one bright spot to this game is its multiplayer. Since the basic Quake III-based engine is robust enough, and sports decent enough net code, there isn't a lot to complain about. Hell, they even put some cool game types in, including the very fun infiltration mode. Still, it just feels like a really nice Quake III mod, and not much more.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

We couldn't stand it, but we know that won't stop you from buying it.

Anyone who gets off on the violence in this game is reveling in violence solely for violence's sake.

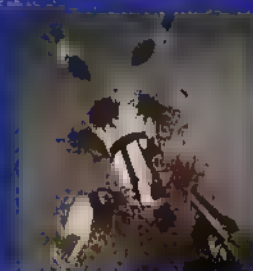


The OICW is one of the hottest pieces of real-world military technology, and the game does a pretty cool job of modeling it, although you'll have to reconfigure your keys to use it.

FACES OF DEATH

The violence and gore in *SOF2*, when set to "excessive," is just that: excessive. It's downright disgusting, and not in that fun horror-movie way. More like that desensitizing snuff-movie way. I know it's optional, and easy to tone down, but it still disturbs me that anyone would program something so vile. I know that's what happens to real bodies in real life, but I really can't see what it adds to the experience of playing a video game. Call me a prude if you want, but I think this kind of over-the-top brutality is numbing, and bad for your soul. Anyone who gets off on the violence in this game is reveling in violence solely for violence's sake. Unlike *Max Payne* or *Grand Theft Auto III*, the gore in *SOF2* adds absolutely nothing to the game.

Sometimes running through waves and waves of bad guys with guns blazing can be a lot of fun. This time, it sure wasn't. And don't you dare argue *SOF2* was that way because it is supposed to be a realistic depiction of combat. If that's true, then the Army should start using old tapes of *The A-Team* as training videos.



Do they teach the Mac-10's akimbo move in Special Forces school?



While fighting this big nasty blue dragon, I can click on my various special attacks on the bottom, and they'll be queued up in the upper-left corner.

Neverwinter Nights

Play a good RPG, then make a great one By Thierry Nguyen



PUBLISHER: Infogrames
DEVELOPER: BioWare
URL: nwn.bioware.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; blood, violence
PRICE: \$95.00

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 450, 128MB RAM, 1.2GB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS:
Pentium III 800, 256MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER: LAN, Internet (2-64 players)

Dungeons & Dragons was born out of an attempt to turn *The Lord of the Rings* into a board game. Thirty years ago, D&D creators Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson hashed out a set of rules that let anyone with an imagination create a high fantasy adventure and play it with others.

BioWare's *Neverwinter Nights* takes that ideology and extends it to the PC. Snug inside one of those newfangled little game boxes is both a good game and the means to turn your own ideas into a playable game. How'd they squeeze all that in there?

As described in last month's cover story, *Neverwinter Nights* is not just a multiplayer experience; BioWare included a 60+ hour single-player campaign to get you started. The campaign feels like an odd melding of *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate*: It's got *Diablo*'s fast-paced, single-person nature (one character, plus whatever they can

summon, and a hireable NPC) married to the quests of the *Baldur's Gate* series. For example, NWN's Stone of Recall acts like *Diablo*'s Town Portal, so you can quickly teleport back to a temple, get healed and revive a fallen henchman, buy and sell loot, and then go right back into action for a small fee. Combat is vintage BioWare: You can pause and issue commands for spells and special attacks, or you can just click on an enemy and hack away as in *Diablo*.

By far the best improvement over BioWare's previous RPGs is the interface. The radial menu is nice (though it takes some getting used to), but the quickbar on the bottom of the screen quickly

becomes king. Using a combination of the Ctrl, Shift, and F-keys, you have a whopping 36 hotkeys that can easily do actions that range from shouting commands, casting spells, using potions and wands, and switching weapons on the fly. In fact, these hotkeys finally let you switch between using a two-handed weapon, dual weapons, sword-and-shield, and a bow, all without going into the inventory screen. The only interface improvement I missed was a way to autosort the inventory, like you can in *Dungeon Siege*.

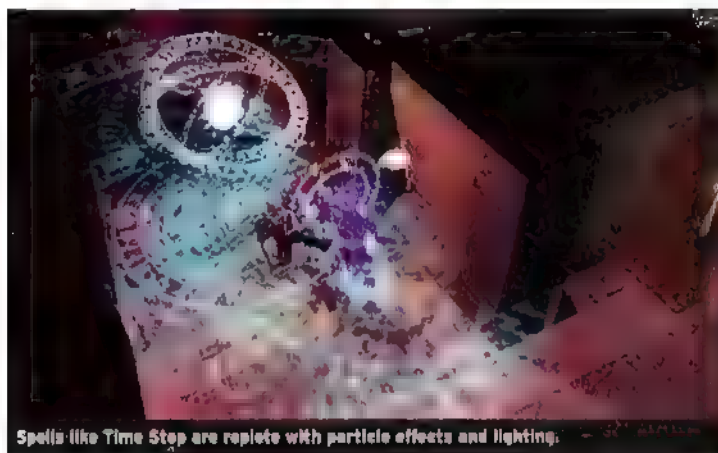
The Long-Awaited Quest

You've read all about the single player

The DM client and tools elevate *Neverwinter Nights* into a creative medium of expression.



You might run into and fight legendary dragons. Note the high-res textures on both the dragon's body and on the floor.



Spells like Time Stop are replete with particle effects and lighting.

and it actually gets even better than described last month (especially in Chapters 2 and 3), but even once that's over with, you won't have reasons to wipe the game off your hard drive.

Like any game, multiplayer is totally dependent on the people you play with. While we got frustrated with most public games (see sidebar), when playing with people we actually trust, the game really became a good simulation of tabletop D&D. The sense of camaraderie was preserved with all of the requisite humorous comments and quips, and the DM invisibly made sure everything worked right for us, whether it was doing out experience or making sure we didn't accidentally screw ourselves over by destroying critical items (he merely replaced it when we weren't looking).

Of course, there are always stipulations and concessions when translating true, 3rd Edition D&D with friends, beer, and Cheetos into a workable PC multiplayer model, but this really is the closest we have to it. Just like in real D&D, you can cooperatively play games where you either just engage in massive killyoggy, or partake in a dialogue-heavy story-driven

A DMING WE WILL GO

As described in last month's feature, the Dungeon Master's interface is identical to the player's, with the exception of the DM menu up top. With mere clicks, the DM can quickly drop down new critters and treasure for their players, or defeat enemies when the going gets tough.

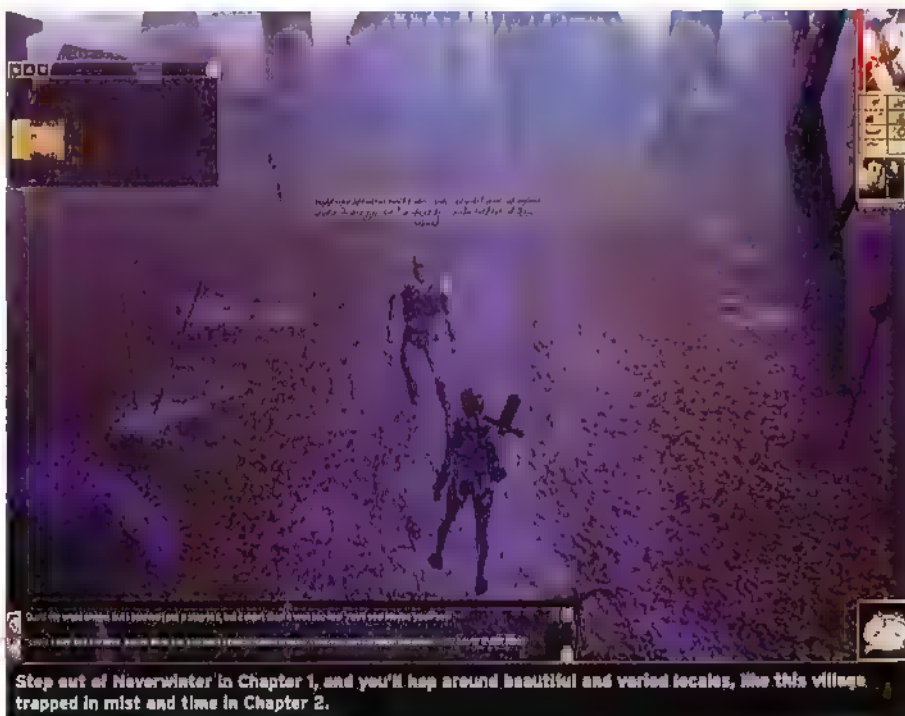
At press time, most Dungeon Masters to be found online, unfortunately, were just lame dorks who liked to lead the map from the single-player Prelude chapter and haphazardly drop dragons all over the place. Like any game, *Neverwinter's* multiplayer experience will be only as good as the people playing it. Hopefully, as more people complete the game, the other chapters and their more interesting quests and locations will become unlocked and accessible online. Subsequently, we can also hope for more modules to be created from scratch, and more people interested in actually making an entertaining session as opposed to those who just like dropping Balors all over the place.



The DM controls a little avatar who can teleport anywhere, drop down new enemies, and dole out treasure.



The limitation of controlling one character in single-player is nullified by an online DM screen.



Step out of *Neverwinter* in Chapter 1, and you'll hop around beautiful and varied locales, like this village trapped in mist and time in Chapter 2.



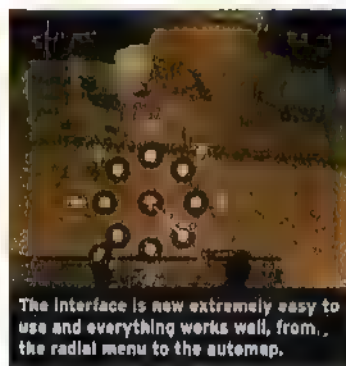
Not only will you fight big bad Balors like this guy, but you can use your Charisma and Persuade skill to get him to either give you more information or money.

campaign (harder, but still very possible).

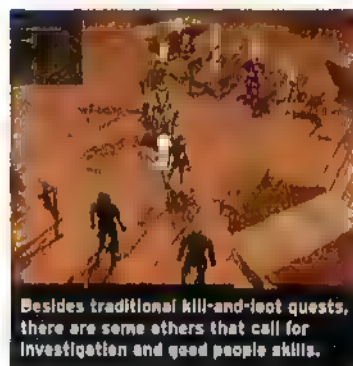
Already, people are cranking out new single player modules using the Aurora toolset (heck, BioWare just released a new multiplayer module, Contest of Champions), so even if you don't want to play online with someone named Fizzlebizzle The Tenacious, you can just play the slick single-player expansions

WHY NWN AND NOT VTM?

The last game that promised custom adventure creation and a DM mode on top of the 3D engine-powered single-player version was *Vampire: The Masquerade—Redemption*. Yet we said that it was “a vapid, repetitive debacle that will leave [...] casual role-players [...] hunting for some garlic and holy water.” How can we say that people won't get burned again by *NWN*? Two simple reasons: First, BioWare's RPG experience results in solid and refined gameplay, as opposed to the nonsensical clickfest that was *VTM*'s single-player; second, *Vampire*'s Embrace level editor wasn't released until a significant time after the game shipped. Hence, the multiplayer community didn't really take off, since the editor came out too late. *NWN* ships with Aurora right in the box, and there's already a strong community dedicated to just using it. Extra bonus reason: There are way more D&D nerds in this world than wannabe bloodsuckers.



The interface is now extremely easy to use and everything works well, from the radial menu to the autopap.



Besides traditional kill-and-loot quests, there are some others that call for investigation and good people skills.

gamers are making, or even make one yourself!

The Whole Party Gets Together

I can easily start griping about the slow start in single player (Chapter 1 is immensely boring), or the lack of a party in single-player. The henchman idea is pretty darn good, but lack of direct control

gets annoying. Also, more monsters would have been nice; why is my Level 15 fighter thwacking Orcs in Chapter 3 instead of Mind-Flayers or Beholders? There are also technical issues, such as corrupted savegames and occasional lockups: BioWare gets a little slack for providing an easy way to update your game to the latest version, but these bugs are still present out of the box.

Yet, these quibbles don't detract significantly from the game. Everything about it comes together so well—the later parts of the single-player campaign, the multiplayer possibilities, the expandability due to Aurora—that it's easy to overcome any initial annoyance. I can easily see this game still being played years from now, even in a mutated form, due simply to diligent gamers making their own adventures and stories. Yes, I am placing faith in other gamers, but I feel that *NWN* has a solid foundation to place such faith upon.

The fact is, BioWare could have released just the single-player game and been done with it. But the DM client and tools elevate *Neverwinter Nights* from being just another good RPG into a creative medium of expression.

VERDICT ★★★★★

A good BioWare RPG that just happens to let gamers make their own—possibly greater—adventures themselves.

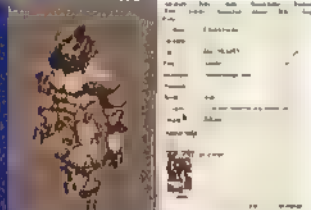
AURORA SHINES

Arguably the true heart of *NWN*, the Aurora toolset is intended to open the floodgates of adventuring, giving anyone with a PC the ability to re-create their own computer-game version of *Lord of the Rings*. In truth, while Aurora is a leap forward in accessibility compared to other mod tools, it's still a daunting program that takes time to learn.

It's extremely easy to lay down the basic structure of a module—creating the actual areas, linking them together, and populating them with townsfolk and critters. I was easily able to draft up a murky dungeon underneath some posh mansion, and then with just a few mouse clicks put down a few zombies led by some uber-mummy. But tying together all of these elements into a cohesive whole takes some work because of the scripting.

Essentially, it'd help to be familiar with the C++ programming language to be good at scripting. The provided Scripting Wizard gives a good starting point in creating basic scripts, but anything requiring a modicum of complexity needs more hands-on work. This is upped significantly if you're designing heavily scripted modules (not necessitating a DM to be playable) or modules featuring more than just hack-and-slash.

That said, Aurora is still a step forward in usability, and it really does blur the line between player and game developer. Just try jumping into it, experiment, and refer to the various forums at BioWare's site for help.



The Aurora toolset is pretty easy to use when it comes to plopping cool enemies down onto your map. Why wasn't this guy in the single-player campaign?



Already BioWare has released a new module called Contest of Champions.

LONG BEFORE THE HORROR BEGAN,
FEAR STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.



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Strong Language
Violence



Expansion Pack requires Aliens versus Predator™ 2 to play.

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Legion

On my signal, unleash hell

By John Fletcher

PUBLISHER: Strategy First
DEVELOPER: Silithrine
Strategies and Paradox
Entertainment GmbH
Strategy URL:
www.silithrine.co.uk
ESRB RATING: Teen; blood,
violence
PRICE: \$39.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 233
MMX, 64MB RAM,
230MB hard drive
space RECOMMENDED
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II
MULTIPLAYER: None

Remember the opening battle sequence in *Gladiator*, before that creepy Joaquin Phoenix showed up and got all vexed? That type of scene is what *Legion* is all about: bringing Rome to the natives on the bloody tip of a sword. Also like *Gladiator*, *Legion* is so epic, engrossing, and downright fun that you overlook its shortcomings and simply have a great time, time after time.

Legion's gameplay focuses on balancing needs, from resource collection and city building to army composition, in your quest to expand Roman dominion. At the strategic level, *Legion* functions like most other empire-building games: gather resources to build armies while using diplomacy to keep your list of enemies manageable. *Legion* assigns each city an efficiency rating in producing the three game resources of food, ore, and wood. It also limits the number of builds available in each city. The best thing to do is have each city exploit one resource or build troops. Use any extra slots for buildings that increase productivity. Wood is particularly important—and contentious—since most construction requires huge amounts of it and good forests always seem to be in someone else's kingdom. What better reason to go to war.

And make no mistake: Fighting is what *Legion* is truly about, and I simply love



Gather resources, build cities, field armies. It is a strategy game, after all.



Despite its simplistic presentation, diplomacy is vital in attaining victory.



The true test of generalship lies in the planning, not the execution. Prepare your troops for battle...



...and then sit back and let your soldiers do the fighting.

this game's battle engine. In *Legion* you determine each unit's placement, formation, and general orders. When battle starts you cross your fingers and watch. However, by taking away the need to micromanage the battle, with all the interruptions and pauses that entails, *Legion* turns each fight into a dramatic, tense miniseries. I was honestly amazed at how engrossing it was to watch a plan unfold, a real "seeing the forest for the trees" type of revelation that coincidentally doubles as one of the most historically valid models of ancient warfare ever in a computer game. Some dorks will complain that they can't control their units on the battlefield, but neither could generals in the ancient world. You have to know your troops and actually think about a strategy. The trick is getting the right guys in the right formation to the right terrain at the right time. For example, auxilia are brittle in the open but get them in a forest and they're tougher than veteran Legionnaires. Proper formation is just

as important. My favorite is the crescent. It breaks up enemy attacks and is a great way to compensate for inferior numbers, but it's vulnerable to outflanking. Putting it all together consistently is your greatest challenge and reward.

Legion has weaknesses. The graphics, while having some very nice battlefield prerenders, definitely look dated after games like *Shogun*. The 640x480 screen resolution makes for some scrolling during battles that even 800x600 would have precluded. There are no true sieges and navies are absent. Finally, with up to 20 competing factions per scenario, this game cries out for some kind of multiplayer. All of this merely points to room for sequels and expansions, which, based on *Legion*'s strengths, I'd gladly buy.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Finally, a historically accurate strategy/wargame that's simple and fun.

Dino Island

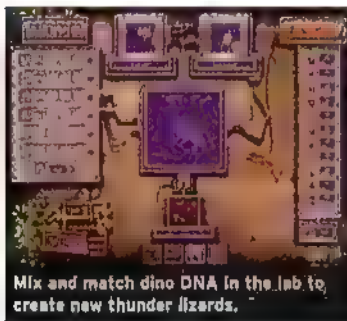
Leapin' lizards!
By Elizabeth McAdams

PUBLISHER: Monte Cristo
DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
GENRE: Theme park
simulation
URL: www.montecristogames.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone
PRICE: \$29.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II
400, 64MB RAM
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS:
128MB RAM, MULTIPLE
None

The latest take on the ol' theme park sim from French development company Monte Cristo allows you to create your very own Jurassic park in 3D. If you think you've heard this formula before, well...you have!

Dino Island differs from your run-of-the-mill prehistoric wonderland with its innovative laboratory and sporting events (that's right, dino sports). The laboratory allows you to mutate, clone, and create new dinos by combining genes from 20 original beasts. You can mix and match skin, color, and personalities for that ideal dino. No matter what your views on genetic engineering, I guarantee the laboratory



Mix and match dino DNA in the lab to create new thunder lizards.



Dinosaurs battling school buses in an arena—it just doesn't get any better than this.

will bring a smile to your face.

The sporting events are a bit more bizarre. Basically, in order to attract people to your theme park, your dinosaurs must perform in arena exhibitions. Racing your dinos is one thing, but dino boxing and destruction derby? Be prepared to pimp those dinos to maximize profits.

Dino Island boasts a decent 3D view and some fantastic looking maps with various themes to choose from (African, tropical, etc.), but as much as I wanted to love this game, I had a difficult time with the in-game interface and menu

system, which unfortunately, never got much better.

Dino Island has the potential to be a truly unique sim, but it's got the blocky aesthetics of an edutainment title, yet is too complex for junior to play on his own. If you're anything like me, you'd be better off playing one of the other dino park sims out there.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Dino Island just doesn't do enough or do enough well to really make it worth your while.

Zoo Tycoon: Dinosaur Digs

Dinosaurs rock By Elizabeth McAdams

PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game
Studio
DEVELOPER: Blue Fang
Games/EA
Strategy
URL: www.zootycoon.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone; mild
violence
PRICE: \$24.95

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II
233, 64MB RAM
(128MB RAM for
Windows XP), 300MB
hard drive space,
original copy of Zoo
Tycoon
RECOMMENDED
REQUIREMENTS: 128MB RAM
MULTIPLE: None

Last October, *Zoo Tycoon* had us nurturing our very own animal menagerie. But, as with most zoos, after you've seen its inhabitants, had lemonade and caught a whiff of the dung, there's not much left to keep you coming back. Microsoft, being the tycoons that they are, attempts to recapture our attention with their latest *Zoo Tycoon* expansion, *Dinosaur Digs*.

I was disappointed to learn dinosaurs were the main characters of this expansion. I had wanted to see a new variety of animals (bunnies for a petting zoo) and objects in the same style as the original *Zoo Tycoon*. But despite my initial displeasure, *Dinosaur Digs* adds a refreshing twist to what could have been a tiresome game. Nothing beats seeing a Dinosaur Recovery Team rope in from a chopper to tranquilize a ferocious dino that is terrorizing innocent guests!

Dinosaur Digs adds to your zoo plenty of prehistoric animals, most of which require electric fences and heavy sedatives to tame.

You purchase each dino as an egg, which requires a scientist (similar to the zookeeper in the original) to monitor the environment in order to hatch. In addition, more than 100 new prehistoric-themed objects and plenty of new maps rekindle the addictive urge to customize your animal kingdom. Balancing the right number of rest rooms, food stands, exhibits, and concrete paths can be a science in itself.

Dinosaur Digs meshes into the original game seamlessly and painlessly. I experienced no hitches, and the best part is that the gameplay and user



Least-answered ad ever on monster.com: sweeper of styrococorus crap.

interface are the same as the original. As an option, you can filter which animals and objects you want to view by selecting AI, and then *Zoo Tycoon* or *Dino Digs* in the menu.

Although *Dinosaur Digs* is targeted to an older crowd than the original game, it should provide any fan of the sim theme park genre some solid amusement.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Dinosaur Digs doesn't drastically revitalize *Zoo Tycoon*, but it's worthwhile for fans.



Screen resolutions go up to 1280x768 in 32-bit color. Visually, *Age of Wonders II* is a knockout, with detailed unit and tile graphics and good spell effects.

Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne

Classic fantasy-conquest gaming with loads of depth **By Thomas L. McDonald**



PUBLISHER: Gathering of Developers

DEVELOPER: Triumph Studios

GENRE: Strategy

URL: www.ageofwonders.com

ESRB RATING: Teen; animated

blood, animated violence

PRICE: \$39.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 300,
64MB RAM, 560MB hard

drive space **RECOMMENDED**

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III

750, 128MB RAM

MULTIPLAYER: LAN (2-8 players)

The good ones borrow. The great ones steal.

Sure, we've played *Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne* before. Not just as the original *Age of Wonders*, but as *Warlords*, *Heroes of Might and Magic*, *Master of Magic*, and even *Disciples*. Good-nay, great-games all. They deserve to be reinvented every couple of years, if only to keep the graphics brand-sparking new. What *Age of Wonders II* lacks in originality, however, it makes up for in execution. Even with a few small interface issues and other minor points, it remains an addictive fantasy-hero-conquest experience on par with the best games it imitates.

Triumph Studios has distilled the most appealing elements of the fantasy-strategy genre into a satisfying mix of tactical combat, magic, hero building, role playing, city conquest, jam-packed maps, and dependably

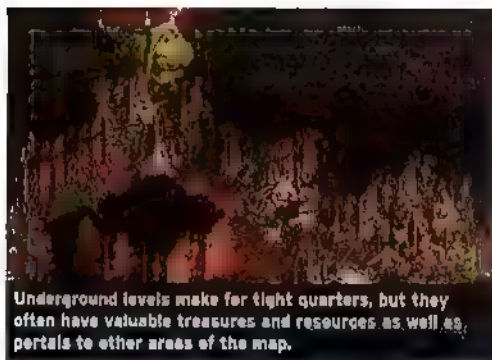
familiar races. Pacing and balance can be devilishly hard to achieve in complex strategy games like this. *AOW2* largely avoids the midgame lull and end game frenzy, effectively straddling that fine line between hands-on control and micromanagement busywork. Aside from a few campaign missions that can get bogged down, it remains compulsively playable, sucking unwary souls into marathon just-one-more-turn sessions. The highest praise for any strategy game.

AOW2 will be easy to pick up for anyone who has experience with the turn-based conquest genre. It is a hard game to master, however, since its many diverse elements interact in complex ways. At the heart of the game is the wizard, and under him, the heroes. The wizard is the player proxy, a powerful magic wielder who can either lead an army into the field or

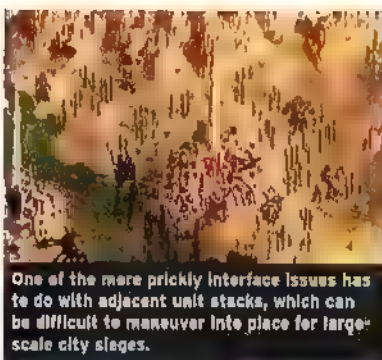
channe, magical spells through Wizard Towers located in cities across the map. These towers are a key strategic element, with almost half of a city's building options dedicated to improving them in various ways.

The rich magic system is one of *AOW2*'s best features. Wizards can specialize in one of seven spheres of magic based on life, death, air, fire, water, earth, or "the cosmos" (a catchall for everything else). Within these disciplines, they can research a dizzying array of spells in three categories. Global spells are cast on the main map to summon creatures, attack a space, or otherwise alter the game world; unit enchantment adds some bonus to a specific unit; and combat spells unleash attacks in the tactical mode.

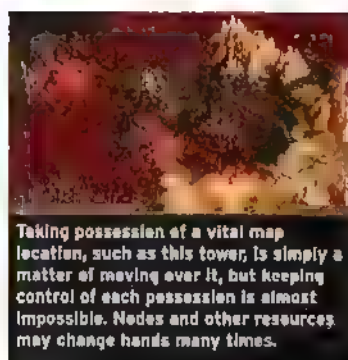
Though the wizard is a powerful fighter with high hit points, most of the



Underground levels make for tight quarters, but they often have valuable treasures and resources as well as portals to other areas of the map.



One of the more prickly interface issues has to do with adjacent unit stacks, which can be difficult to maneuver into place for large-scale city sieges.



Taking possession of a vital map location, such as this tower, is simply a matter of moving over it, but keeping control of each possession is almost impossible. Nodes and other resources may change hands many times.



The tactical sequences are a highlight of AOW2. Computer-resolved battles never favor the human player.



grunt work falls to the field units. Like *Warlords*, the game is chock-full of a familiar mix of fantasy-based infantry, cavalry, artillery, and flying warriors traveling around a busy map in eight-unit stacks. These stacks can be led by a hero, a magical warrior who accrues special items and skills through experience. Though the races are a by-the-number mix of Humans, Orcs, Elves, Undead, and the rest of the ersatz-Tolkien bestiary, the individual units have enough unique characteristics to keep them tactically interesting.

When opposing units meet on the battlefield, gamers are given the option of automatically resolving the battle or personally commanding each unit in an effective tactical mode. The designers must really detest automatic resolution, since they made it grotesquely ineffective. Every battle I lost using the automatic mode later went back and won by commanding units personally. It's actually a very good tactical engine, allowing battlefield offensive and defensive spells from both the wizard (if the battle is within his range) and the hero, as well as siege warfare, ranged

AOW2 effectively straddles that fine line between hands-on control and micromanagement busywork.

attacks, and minor spells from certain magical units. The only real problem—and it's actually a pretty annoying one—is positioning stacks for battle on the main map interface. For multiple stacks to take part in a tactical battle, they have to touch each other. Due to the viewing angle of the map, this often involves some tricky juggling, and some stacks that appear adjacent do not always enter a battle.

As for the maps themselves, they are almost uniformly excellent. There are plenty of terrain types and landscape features, and the countryside is positively swimming with gold (used for building) and mana (for spell casting), as well as ruins, camps, nodes, pools, independent parties, treasures, quests, and portals to the underground layer. (Though the original AOW had two underground layers, AOW2 only has

one.) A few maps, particularly in the campaign game, are a little too linear, with a puzzlelike quality requiring a specific approach rather than a dynamic strategic solution.

In terms of sheer size, *Age of Wonders II* offers plenty of value for the money: a 20-scenario campaign, a couple dozen stand-alone maps, a full scenario editor and even eight-player LAN and Internet support. Though it's all very familiar, there is precious little to really complain about in *Age of Wonders II*. It's like a PG Wadehouse story. We may have read the plot before, but if it's done well, it never loses its appeal.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Forget *Heroes of Might and Magic IV*, *Age of Wonders II* is the reigning fantasy-conquest king.

Uncommon Valor

Pacific War in miniature
By Bruce Geryk

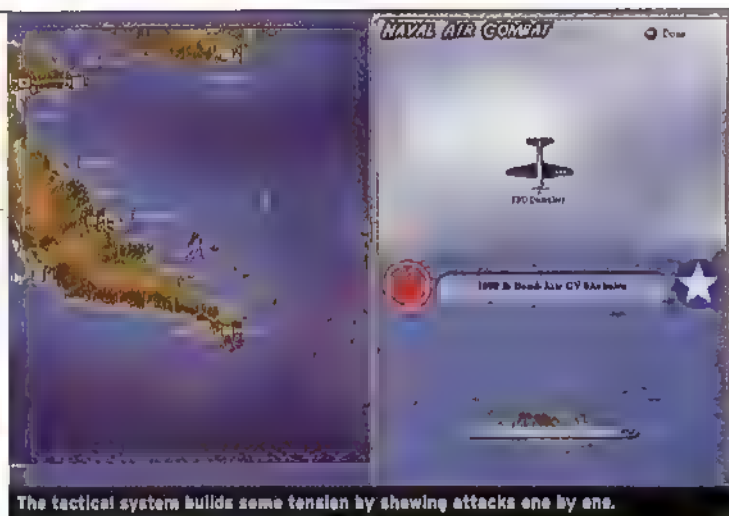
PUBLISHER: Matrix Games
DEVELOPER: 2 by 3 Games
GENRE: Wargame
URL:
www.matrixgames.com
ESRB RATING: Not rated
PRICE: \$49.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II
400, 64MB RAM
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: None
MULTIPLAYER: PBEM, hotseat
(2 players)

Given the wargame pedigree of 2 by 3 Games' Gary Grigsby, Joel Billings, and Keith Brors, it's easy to imagine what a game about the Solomon Islands battles would be like from these three veterans of SSI. Just think Guadalcanal Campaign with great graphics, right? Well, no. Not at all, actually. But that's not necessarily bad.

Uncommon Valor is the prelude to Grigsby's massive overhaul of his classic *Pacific War* (*War in the Pacific* scheduled for release this winter, will cover the entire war, from Pearl Harbor to Japan's surrender). While the systems will differ somewhat due to the latter's larger scale, *Uncommon Valor* does offer a sneak preview of *War in the Pacific*. Rather than being an up-close and personal simulation of the battle for the South Pacific, it's sort of a miniature version of *Pacific War* with a magnifying glass held over the Solomon Islands. On one level, this works. On another, it doesn't.

In Grigsby's *Pacific War*, you had to get resources to the right places to put yourself in a position to win battles over which you had only limited control. In *Uncommon Valor* you do the same thing by assigning units to missions (such as naval search or attack, for example), but the details are still out of your hands. You can assign Combat Air Patrol levels, but you don't necessarily know when your planes will be in the air. The day-long turns mean



You're the admiral, but not the one on the bridge acting as task force commander.

that managing the individual carrier strikes isn't an option. You're the admiral, but not the one on the bridge acting as task force commander—instead you're the top dog in charge of the whole theater.

While this works fine in the campaigns, the scenarios suffer because the situations depicted historically were all about carrier confrontations. For example, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, the actions of the Japanese invasion force were all but irrelevant: If the American carriers could have been forced to withdraw, the landing on New Guinea would have been essentially unopposed, while if the Japanese carriers could have been

sunk or driven off, the invasion craft would have been sitting ducks. Yet in this game, not only are you not in full control of your carrier operations you're also distracted from your goal by the need to manage a roster of peripheral units, many of which have no impact on the outcome. Who cares about 12 P-40s based in Townsville?

Although names like Santa Cruz, Coral Sea, and Eastern Solomons evoke images of tense, cat-and-mouse carrier battles, the corresponding scenarios in *Uncommon Valor* feel artificial and devoid of drama.

Fortunately, there is plenty in the campaigns to keep your interest. *Uncommon Valor* does a better job

than any wargame I've ever seen in demonstrating exactly why the Solomons campaign was so important, and why it was conducted in the way that it was.

Taking strategic airbases to extend your bombing reach and air cover is what drives your strategy, rather than micromanaging search planes. This system lacks some of the tension of a tactical game, but it bodes well for the follow-up scheduled for this winter.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Uncommon Valor is a good game for the wrong reasons.

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Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project

Quite probably the only Duke you'll see this year By Jason Babler

PUBLISHER: ARUSH
Entertainment
DEVELOPER: Sunstorm
Interactive
GENRE: Side-scrolling
Duke mayhem
URL: www.dukenukemmp.com

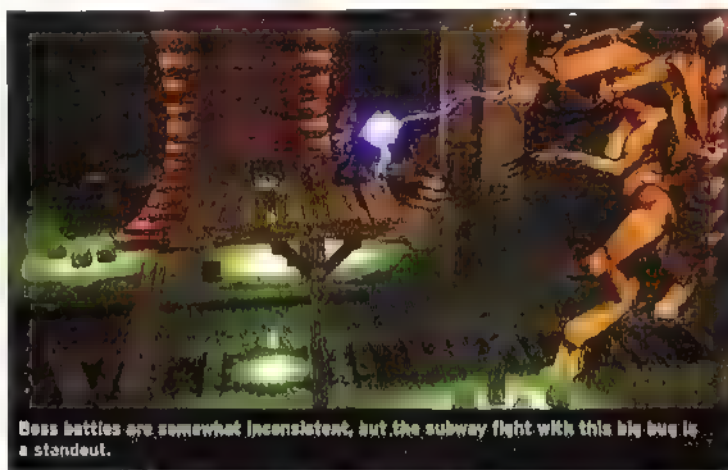
ESRB RATING: Mature; blood
 and gore, violence
PRICE: \$29.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II
 350, 64MB RAM,
 300MB hard
 drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS:
 Pentium III 500,
 32MB 3D card
 MULTIPAYER: None

No, this isn't the ever elusive *Duke Nukem Forever* game we've all been waiting for, but if you absolutely need a cheap taste of everyone's favorite ass-kickin' Bruce Campbell rip-off hero, pick this up when you get the chance.

Going back to its roots, this third-person side-scroller is a surprisingly solid game. The richly detailed, unique level design will surprise you if you have preconceived notions of side-scrollers. The subways, Chinatown, a nightclub, a tanker, and the obligatory space station aren't anything new, but there are still some good "how-do-I-get-up-there" puzzles present. Though it hovers near boring at certain points, the game instinctively knows when to fling something fresh at you. The dynamic camera is cleverly used to show the action at different angles and keep your eyes from glazing over. You get nine weapons, including the fun GLOPP ray that turns nasty Uzi-wielding alligators into little nasty gators, which you then squash with your Mighty Boot. To be honest I haven't enjoyed a side-scroller this much since (gasp) *Bungle's Abuse* on the Mac.

Yes, you do banal things such as searching for bombs to disarm, but it's not too horrible since they're attached to bouncy babes all too eager to...ahem... "thank" you. And yes, you need to find colored key cards to exit levels, but the game mocks itself for doing it via Duke's crass one-liners.



Boss battles are somewhat inconsistent, but the subway fight with this big bug is a standout.

It would've been better to have a bit more variety in the adversaries you have to battle along the way; there are 25 different types of enemies, but they're mostly mutations of a few originals. The boss battles are a bit inconsistent—some incredibly hard, some incredibly cake—but what's here is good, and most of the boss battles themselves are intelligently done. Being hounded by a huge bug that busts up a subway train piece by piece is quite memorable. The final *Terminator*-ish fight against a larger, more egotistical version of your Duke-self is perfect and a real challenge.

Duke's one-liners are typical cheese, but a few made me laugh out loud and

then look around in embarrassment for enjoying them. This is a mature game, so don't run out and buy this for your 6-year-old unless you want him to ask why Suzy next door doesn't wear leather S&M outfits and won't fog him with electric whips like the Fem-Mechs do in the game.

Too bad one of the funniest moments of *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project* doesn't even happen in the game. It's the *Duke Nukem Forever* trailer with a big "coming in 2001" stamped across the preview. Yeah, right.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Yeah, it's a side-scroller, but this Duke is solid and fun to play.

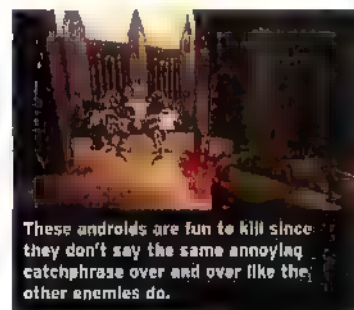
Gore: Ultimate Soldier

Horrible, horrible, horrible By Jason Babler

PUBLISHER: DreamCatcher
DEVELOPER: 4D Rulers
Software
GENRE: FPS
URL: dreamcatcher
 interactive.com/gore/
ESRB RATING: Mature (17+);
 blood and gore,
 violence
PRICE: \$29.99

REQUIREMENTS: PII 350,
 64MB RAM, 700MB
 hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PIII
 600, 128MB RAM
 MULTIPAYER: LAN, Internet
 (2-16 players)

Dad used to take me beaver trapping as a kid in Northern Wisconsin. We'd hike to a frozen lake, looking for signs of trenches that beavers swim through in



These androids are fun to kill since they don't say the same annoying catchphrase over and over like the other enemies do.

shallow water. We'd lay down double-spring Con Bear traps that they swim through, killing them instantly like a huge mousetrap. We'd cut through the ice, haul out the frozen 40 pound carcass, toss it in a sled, and haul it back to our pickup. At home we'd thaw the bodies out in our basement, take them to a shed, skin them, and tan the hide to sell in town. We'd also cut out the beaver castor (scent glands that the critters use to mark their territory) and save them for lure on the traps. Beaver castor smells really bad. After that was done I'd pile the carcasses, feet, and tails into the truck and drive them to a guy who fed them to the pack of hound dogs he kept in his backyard. His yard stunk bad, too. Once, Dad boiled down a beaver



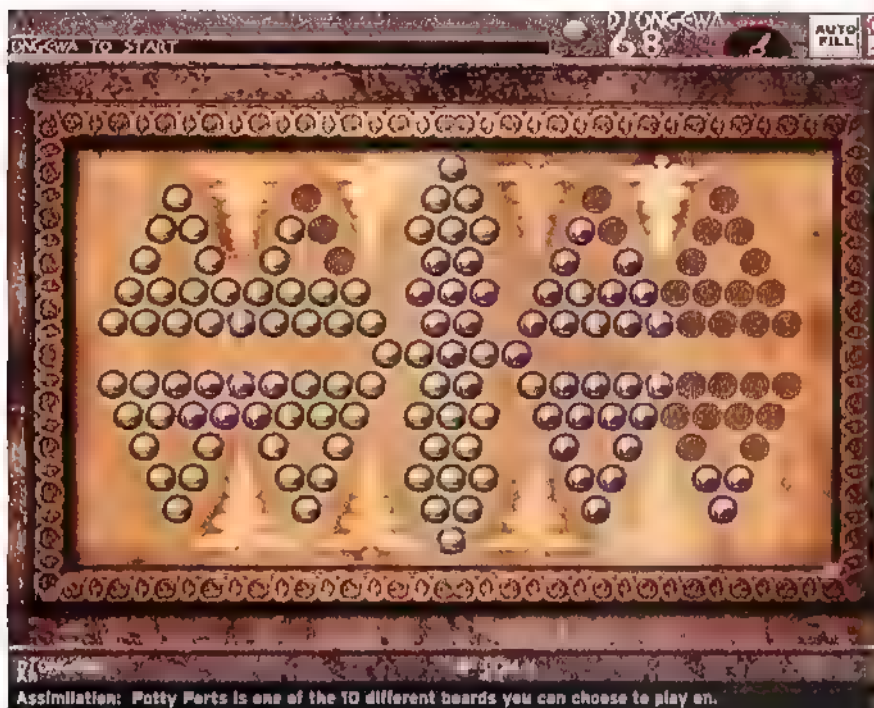
Nothing I'd like to do more on a space station than fight skeletons with chainsaws.

skull to the bone and now keeps it in a curio cabinet in the living room.

I enjoyed that more than playing this game.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Poor graphics, unbalanced weapons, and tired level design can't begin to help this game.



Assimilation: Potty Parts is one of the 10 different boards you can choose to play on.

Assimilation

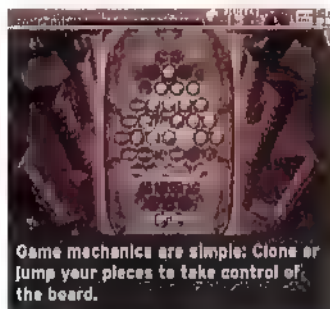
Finally—resistance isn't futile By Dana Jongewaard

PUBLISHED BY Global Star Software
DEVELOPER: Small Rockets
GENRE: Strategy
www.globalstarsoftware.com
SUPPORTING: Everyone
PRICE: \$19.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 400MHz, 32MB RAM, 200MB free hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: 64MB RAM, MULTIMEDIA LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

I was one of many hooked in by *Bejeweled*, spending hours at my desk trying to beat self-proclaimed *Bejeweled* god Robert Coffey's timed mode high score (which I finally did with a whopping 89,433), so I was hoping that Global Star Software had another time-sucking hit on their hands with *Assimilation*.

The gist of *Assimilation* involves moving pegs around a board and either trying to stop the other player from being able to move or trying to have the most pegs on the board by the end of the game. There are 10 different boards to choose from, some of which allow teleporting from



Game mechanics are simple: Clone or jump your pieces to take control of the board.

there's little room for self-improvement—it's just a matter of whether you win or the opponent wins. Sure, you can strive for more complete

It lacks the addictive quality that makes a puzzle game truly great.

one corner of the board to another and you can play at one of three difficulty levels. Multiplayer is available for up to eight players through a LAN or the Internet, although not all of the boards support that many players.

Games that pull me in and make me play them obsessively are those that offer the opportunity to always get better, to beat the last high score, to finish the game faster. In this game,

domination of the board, but in the end, there's not enough of a hook. While *Assimilation* is entertaining for short periods of time, it lacks the addictive quality that makes a puzzle game truly great.

VERDICT ★★☆☆

Mildly entertaining, but you can find games that are more fun for free online.

by Full Sail Student
Brian Germain

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Panzer Campaigns 6: Korsun '44

A Panzer Campaign too far By Bruce Geryk

Simulations

DEVELOPER John Tiller

GENRE Wargame

URL www.hpss.ms.com

ESCRIMING Not rated

PRICE \$40.00

REQUIREMENTS Pentium 200,

32MB RAM, 250MB

hard drive space

RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS None

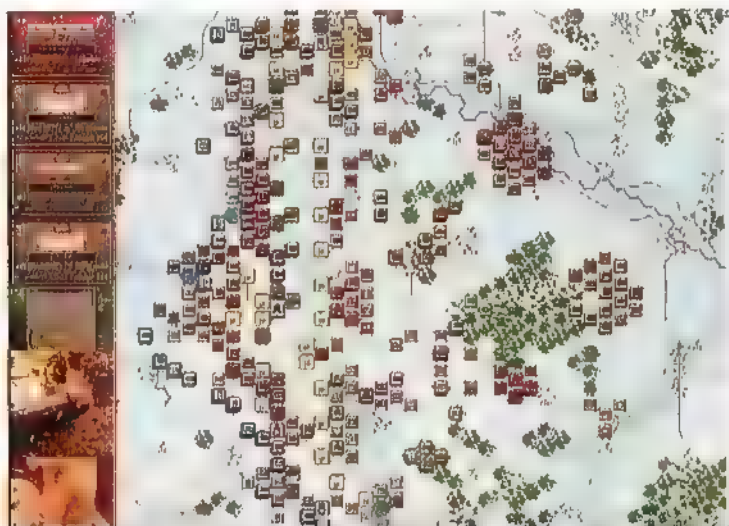
MULTIPLAYER PBEM, hotseat,

modem (2 players)

If you're expecting new things from this sixth instalment in the *Panzer Campaigns* series, you need a break. And it looks like this series does, too. *Panzer Campaigns* had the good fortune to start out with a conflict (Smolensk '41) that emphasized maneuvers and made the system's hallmark detail into something manageable. *Korsun '44* shares the *Kharkov '42* dilemma of too many units and too many hexes. While the general situation is fairly interesting, the game is rendered practically unplayable by its massive size, which can cause an AI turn in the full campaign to take more than half an hour.

There are smaller scenarios, but none of them are interesting, as the compelling part of the game is the formation of the pocket that can be played out only in the campaign game. Everything else is a poor substitute.

A good wargame takes the dramatic elements of a campaign and highlights them, but *Korsun '44* buries them under layers of micromanagement. My 537 men just shot at your 442 men and



Nothing new under the sun. It's a big war, baby, and someone has to click on it.

killed three, while costing you 10 fatigue. I have about 800 more counters to move.

I'll wake you up when I'm done. Unless I fall asleep, too.

VERDICT ★★★★★

If you don't mind waiting half an hour for the AI to take its turn, be our guest.

Combat Medic

Zip up the body bag
By Raphael Liberatore

PUBLISHER Legacy

Interactive

DEVELOPER Legacy

Interactive

GENRE Medical simulation

URL www.legacyinteractive.com

ESCRIMING Teen; blood,

violence

PRICE \$19.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III,

128MB RAM, 825MB

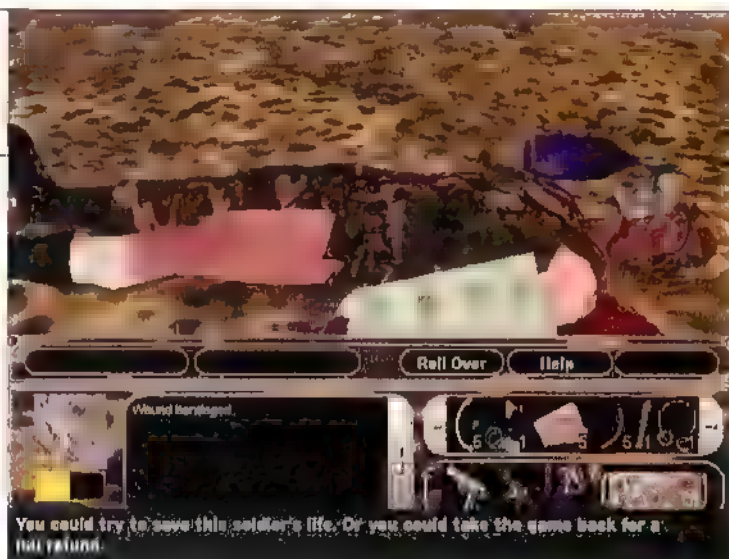
hard drive space

RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM RAM

MULTIPLAYER None

Combat Medic focuses on the role of a Special Forces medic during combat. As part of an SF team, your objective is to gain points (at least 50 out of a possible 100) by saving injured comrades during the heat of battle, while managing a limited supply of medical resources. Chest wounds, excessive hemorrhaging, exposed vital organs, and missing appendages are just a few of the 45 injuries your medic must face until medevac helicopters arrive. Unlike real SF medics, who must be everything from surgeon to gynecologist, your medic won't be able to cure a headache if he doesn't pack the right medical gear or



You could try to save this soldier's life. Or you could take the game back for a refund.

Ten missions take place in the confines of a very limiting 2D overhead map, where large, square icons represent both teammates and enemy soldiers shooting at each other. When it's time to treat the wounded, *Combat Medic* switches to a horribly ugly 3D view of your injured comrade. Unfortunately, the game's interface fails to deliver in almost every conceivable way as *Combat Medic* turns your PC into the prime casualty with

game-crashing bugs, long load times, nonexistent AI, and cheesy 16-bit graphics. My advice: Unless you're a medical student desiring to work in age, avoid this game like a bullet in the head.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Put 1,000 monkeys in a room with 1,000 computers and in 1,000 years even they won't play *Combat Medic*.

Avoid this game like a bullet in the head.

know how to use it. Even though there's a tutorial, the lack of information on medical procedures and tools is a serious handicap to all but trained medical professionals.



This is an example of boot-licking, one of the interactions your characters can engage in.

The Partners

The French call it merde By Dana Jongewaard

PUBLISHER Monte Cristo

DEVELOPER Monte Cristo

GENRE Idiot simulation

URL

www.montecristogames.com

ESRB RATING Not rated

PRICE \$29.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II

300, 64MB RAM,

600MB hard

drive space

RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS None

MIN. SPEAKER None

There are so many disparaging ways to begin this review. But let's just say that it's not a good sign when even the page numbers in the manual's table of contents are wrong. Best described as *Ally McBeal* meets *The Sims*, the only good thing about *The Partners* was that myriad technical flaws prevented me from having to suffer through completing the game.

The game has three campaigns of seven missions each, all set in law offices. You are given objectives to fulfill, such as "Eva must avoid flirting in front of the Webcam." Some objectives stem from the cases the lawyers are assigned to work on, but sadly, the only thing you see of the cases are the request for representation and the jury's verdict. And the only effect court cases have on gameplay is that you constantly have to click the characters back to their desks to keep them working so they have a chance at winning the cases, which makes the firm money, which gives you the resources to buy things to satisfy their desires.

If you don't keep the lawyers' needs satiated, then they won't perform as well in the courtroom. The objects and furniture you must buy to keep them happy have incredibly random associations: The fax machine fulfills

the need for sports; pushing a broom around gives characters a sense of power, and all metal pieces of furniture satisfy lust (though their wooden counterparts do not).

While *The Sims* gave you the chance to create new characters, build new houses, and mess with all of the Sims' heads, *The Partners* merely messes with your head. You have no creative input, and basically you become a slave to these annoying people whose actions are random and nonsensical—it's very normal for the boss to walk over and hit another employee on the head for no reason at all. You can't even have the fun of building their office, rooms are predesigned, and when you purchase one, it drops into a predesignated area. The interface is clunky, and scenarios don't stay paused when you click between menus.

Fortunately, the game frequently quit out in every single one of the campaigns, so I couldn't finish. I have never been so happy for programming incompetence in my life. I could fill up a good two pages of reasons why I hate *The Partners*. You're much better off watching *Ally McBeal* reruns on FX.

VERDICT ★★★★★

I'd rather watch *Callista Flockhart* purr than play this game.

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Tech

The best ways to part with your hard-earned money Edited by William O'Neal





Portable Gaming Comes of Age

The gaming laptop scene has gotten crowded since Toshiba and Dell first jumped in with the r

GeForce2 Go-powered aptops last year. Since then, ATI has attempted to up the ante with the Mobility Radeon 7500, and is following it up with a new chip in a few months. Now PC manufacturers are selling machines that can truly wear the badge of "Gaming Notebook." So I rounded up five such systems: two with Nvidia's screaming-fast 64MB GeForce4 440 Go graphics card, and three with ATI's 64MB Mobility Radeon 7500. While the results didn't spring any big surprises, they did show that the gaming laptop market is getting super competitive. And it's sure to get even tougher when gamers realize they can have all the power of a desktop in a portable package.

anywhere near. I look further. These machines read by William O'Neal

BREAK THROUGH POWER



DELL INSPIRON 8200

Since they jumped on the wagon with their GeForce-enabled Inspirons, Dell's notebooks have pretty much been the Shaq of laptop gaming—big, powerful, and fast. Little has changed with this version. Laptop gaming may no longer be a two-horse race between Toshiba and Dell, but the Inspirons continue to set the bar.

The 8200 that I reviewed comes with a 2GHz Mobile Pentium 4 CPU, a scant 256MB of DDR memory, Nvidia's 64MB GeForce4 440 Go graphics card, a 40GB hard drive, and an UltraXGA display that supports a maximum resolution of 1600x1200. The Inspiron 8200 scored the fastest times on every test other than *Serious Sam*, when Toshiba and Alienware bested it. Its 3DMark2001 SE Pro score of 5210 is amazing for a laptop. Although the Inspiron feels heavy compared to the Toshiba, at 8.22 pounds

it's the second lightest machine in this roundup. Furthermore, the Inspiron boasts all the trappings necessary to qualify as a full-on desktop replacement: integrated 802.11b, CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive, FireWire, ethernet, and a gang of USB ports.

BUY IF you're not afraid of the \$3,000 price tag and need the fastest laptop around.

SKIP IF price is a concern.

TOSHIBA SATELLITE 5105-S701

Toshiba's Satellite laptops are damn near perfect—they're fast and stylish, and at 7.26 pounds they're





ALIENWARE 51-M

light enough to actually be called portables. One look at this machine's guts and it's no surprise that the thing flies: 1.8GHz Mobile Pentium 4, 512MB of DDR memory, Nvidia's 64MB GeForce4 440 Go graphics card, and 40GB of storage (by press time the unit will ship with 60GB). While the Dell is all about brute power, the Toshiba 5105-S701 has some nice touches that add to the overall user experience: Harman/Kardon speakers, a remote control, SmartMedia and SD slots, integrated 802.11b, and a crisp, 15-inch UXGA display that supports a maximum resolution of 1600x1200.

Under the pressure of testing, the Satellite showed that it can hang with the more powerful Inspiron, and it was faster than Alienware's 51-M (although the Alienware laptop bested the Satellite at 3DMark2001 SE Pro).

We're not sure how Toshiba manages to keep the price of this laptop down, but its \$2,599 price ties with the Alienware 51-M's for the lowest in this roundup. So let's review: It's light, fast, and inexpensive. What more could you ask for?

BUY IF you want a fast, light laptop with an awesome sound system.

SKIP IF you want the very fastest rig around.

ALIENWARE 51-M

When I heard that Alienware was gonna start shipping a gaming laptop, I was naturally excited. And considering the speed and power that the desktop machines boast, my expectations were decidedly high. My first impression of the 51-M, though, was that it was one hell of a heavy laptop—9.94 pounds, in fact. Alienware ships the 51-M with a 2.4GHz Pentium 4 desktop CPU, and because of that, the unit needs an enormous battery if it is to run for two to three hours. (Note: You can order this laptop at Alienware's Website configured with a Mobile Pentium 4 CPU.) Furthermore, the 51-M is one of the hottest so-called laptops I've ever tested. I shudder to imagine all that went into figuring out how to cool this thing.

Criticisms aside, the 51-M is the fastest of the

Radeon-equipped rigs that I tested. Its 3DMark2001 SE Pro score of 5160 at 1024x768x32 came plenty close to the score posted by the GeForce4 440 Go-powered Dell, and it was even higher than the Toshiba's. Like the Dell and Toshiba machines, the 51-M has a 15-inch UXGA LCD, a display that's very crisp at 1600x1200 but also manages to scale well to the lower resolutions most games use. Future versions of the 51-M will ship with the GeForce4 440 Go.

Everything else about this laptop showed that it isn't really a laptop—or even a portable, for that matter—but rather a full-on desktop replacement that you can take somewhere if need be. LAN-party fanboys, take note!

BUY IF you're looking for a desktop replacement and you have an affinity for Alienware.

SKIP IF you're looking for a true portable or want a machine that boasts the more powerful Nvidia GeForce4 440 Go.

GATEWAY SOLO 600

Although not one of the faster laptops in this roundup, Gateway's Solo 600 is a capable gaming rig. It ships with the 64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 7500 and a 1.7GHz Mobile Pentium 4 CPU (units are also available with 1.8GHz CPUs). Being able to run *Quake III: Arena* at 100-plus frames per second is impressive for a laptop, but the GeForce4 440 Go machines are achieving frame rates of 150 or more fps, so the Solo isn't quite in that league. At 8.8 pounds the Solo weighs in as more of a desktop replacement than a true portable, and the rig's various components live up to that: 40GB hard drive, CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive, FireWire port, and integrated AC-3 optical Dolby digital output.

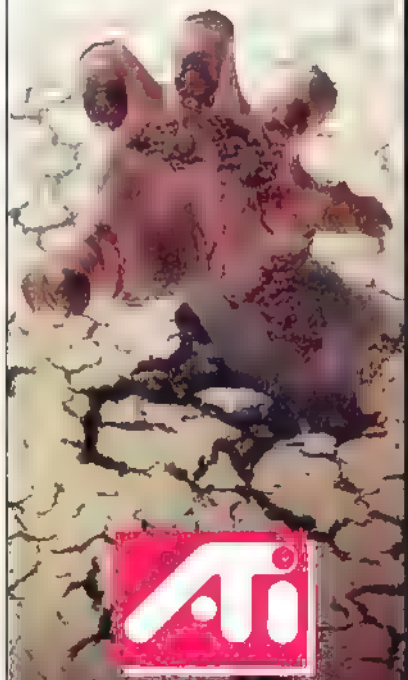
The Solo turned in a lackluster performance, but I was also put off by its SXGA LCD, which supports a maximum resolution of 1024x768. This resolution is fine for most games, but I prefer the UXGA displays that the Dell, Toshiba, and Alienware boast (which are capable of running at

BREAK THROUGH PERFORMANCE



The power is within your grasp. The amazing RADEON™ 9700 VPU is the fastest* 3D graphics board ever, delivering the ultimate gaming experience. It's the first to provide 8 pipelines for twice the rendering power. The first to fully support DirectX® 9.0 delivering the highest level of realism possible. Nothing can hold you back now.

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The Alienware 51-M isn't so much a laptop as a full-on desktop replacement.

Radeon™ 9700

*ATI RADEON™ 9700 128MB DDM compared with Nvidia GeForce 4 4400 128MB DDM, as measured by Universal Performance Test v2.1.8 and 3DMark 2001 SE. Based on the following system: 1.7GHz Pentium 4 CPU, 512MB RAM, 40GB drive, 32MB ATI RADEON™ 9700, Intel 800 chipset, 5.25MB CD-ROM, 1200x1600 resolution, 1024x768 view, 1200x1600.

Gateway's Solo 600 is a capable gaming rig, but there are lighter, faster, and less expensive laptops out there.

GATEWAY SOLO 600

1600x1200).

If the Solo were the cheapest laptop of the bunch, it would deserve some slack, but the fact is that it's more expensive than the much better Toshiba and Alienware rigs.

BUY IF you hate that "Dude, you're getting a Dell" guy.

SKIP IF you want better performance and less weight.

WINBOOK J4

WinBook's J4 bears the unfortunate distinction of being both the slowest laptop in this roundup and the most expensive. I was actually surprised that the WinBook performed so poorly. Like the Alienware 51-M, the WinBook J4 ships with a 2.4GHz Pentium 4 desktop CPU, so I at least expected it to outperform the Gateway Solo 600, which comes with a 1.7GHz Mobile Pentium 4. It did not. But despite its uninspired performance, the J4 isn't a *bad* laptop. It ships with ATI's 64MB Mobility Radeon 7500, 512MB of DDR memory, a 15-inch SXGA LCD with a native resolution of 1400x1024, a 40GB hard drive, and integrated 802.11b wireless LAN.

The J4's gaming performance leaves a bit to be desired, but you can at least game with it. And as it weighs 8.34 pounds, you can take it with you.

BUY IF you have a special place in your heart for WinBook and you like silver.

SKIP IF you're on a budget or you want a faster laptop for your money.

WINBOOK J4

By the Numbers

MANUFACTURER/MODEL	Dell Inspiron 8200	Toshiba Satellite B855-IT01	Alienware 41-M	Gateway Solo 4100	WinBook 44
Price	\$3,029	\$2,599	\$2,599	\$2,849	\$3,295
Rating	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Operating System	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Professional	Windows XP Professional
Processor	2GHz Mobile Pentium 4	1.8GHz Mobile Pentium 4	2.4GHz Pentium 4 (desktop)	1.7GHz Mobile Pentium 4	2.4GHz Pentium 4 (desktop)
Memory	256MB DDR SDRAM	512MB DDR SDRAM	512MB DDR SDRAM	512MB DDR SDRAM	512MB DDR SDRAM
Graphics Processor	64MB Nvidia GeForce4 440 Go	64MB Nvidia GeForce4 440 Go	64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 7500	64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 7500	64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 7500
Display	15" UXGA TFT active-matrix LCD (1600x1200)	15" UXGA TFT active-matrix LCD (1600x1200)	15" UXGA TFT active-matrix LCD (1600x1200)	15" SXGA TFT active-matrix LCD (1280x1024)	15" SXGA TFT active-matrix LCD (1400x1024)
Hard Drive	40GB ATA100	40GB ATA100 (60GB available)	40GB ATA100	40GB ATA100	40GB ATA100
CD/DVD-ROM Drive	8x/4x/4x/24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive	8x/4x/4x/24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive	8x/8x/4x/24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive	8x/8x/4x/24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive	8x/8x/4x/24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive
Input Device	Touchpad, pointing stick	sPad touchpad	Touchpad	Touchpad	Touchpad, pointing stick
Miscellaneous	Two Type II PCMCIA slots, two USB ports, one IEEE 1394 port, Integrated Wi-Fi (802.11b), 10/100MB ethernet LAN, 56-Kbps modem	Two Type II PCMCIA slots, two USB ports, one IEEE 1394 port, Integrated Wi-Fi (802.11b), 10/100MB ethernet LAN, 56-Kbps modem, SmartMedia and SD expansion slots, Toshiba remote control	One Type II PCMCIA slot, four USB ports, one IEEE 1394 port, 10/100MB ethernet LAN, 56-Kbps modem, Wavelength 3D stereo with S/PDIF digital-out	Two Type II PCMCIA slots, two USB ports, one IEEE 1394 port, 10/100MB ethernet LAN, 56-Kbps modem, 3D stereo with optical digital-out	Integrated 802.11b wireless LAN, one Type II PCMCIA slot, four USB ports, one IEEE 1394 port, 10/100MB ethernet LAN, 56-Kbps modem
Weight (in pounds)	8.22	7.26	9.94	8.8	8.34

TESTS	Dell Inspiron 8200	Toshiba Satellite B855-IT01	Alienware 41-M	Gateway Solo 4100	WinBook 44
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x16	152	142	115	105	87
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x32	148	140	109	100	79
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32	65	62	47	44	34
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	37	55	49	36	43
Expendable 1024x768x16	94	86	89	69	75
Expendable 1024x768x32	91	84	72	59	58
Re-Volt 1024x768x16	227	213	211	192	176
Re-Volt 1024x768x32	185	180	189	176	149
Re-Volt 1600x1200x32	84	81	86	81	69
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x16	79	91	90	53	60
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x32	59	81	80	39	37
Serious Sam: TSE 1600x1200x32	29	39	43	21	34
Geomean Score	88	93	87	67	67
3DMark 2000	164	156	145	133	124
MadOnion.com 3DMark2001SE Pro 1024x768x32	5210	4886	5160	4123	3993
MadOnion.com 3DMark2001SE Pro 1600x1200x32	2940	2747	2848	2528	2277
TOTAL SCORE	686	665	634	552	524



The Awesome ABS 3400

The new kid puts pressure on the old guard By William O'Neal



Available from ABS

Computers

at www.buyabs.com

MSRP \$2,099

Testing computers by upstart ABS reminds me of an episode of the Jon Lovitz vehicle *The Critic*. In this episode, Lovitz's character, Jay Sherman, is watching *A Few Good Men II*, the imagined sequel to 1992's Cruise-Nicholson movie. We all remember the pivotal scene in the movie when Cruise's character demands the truth from Nicholson. Well, in Jon Lovitz's spoof, Cruise's character is played by Christian Slater, and upon demanding the truth, is told by Nicholson, "You want the truth?! I'll give you the truth! You act like me! You talk like me! Boy, you're not me!"

I wonder if the guys at Alienware are awake at night thinking the same thing

about ABS. "You look like us! You perform like us. Boys, you're not Alienware!" The thing is, ABS isn't Alienware, and that's exactly how I imagine ABS planned it.

ABS' latest rig, the Awesome 3400 is an AMD Athlon XP 2200+ that, at just a hair above \$2,000, is a smoker. Although the Awesome's case and guts resemble a rig that the Florida-based Alienware might put together, the price tag reveals its true heritage. As the performance scores attest, ABS put together an Athlon machine that can easily hang with my 2.53GHz Pentium 4 Power Rig. Everything about this machine is top-notch: an ASUS A7V333 motherboard, 512MB of Corsair PC3200 XMS DDR memory, an ASUS

128MB Nvidia GeForce4 TI 4600 graphics card, Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer sound card, and dual 60GB Maxtor hard drives in a RAID array.

ABS doesn't overclock the graphics cards, so the machine I tested was very stable. The company keeps system prices down by including good peripherals that aren't quite top of the line, like NEC's 19-inch MultiSync FE950+ monitor instead of the 21-inch FE1250+ and Creative Labs' Inspire 5.1 5300 speakers as opposed to the Klipsch ProMedia 5.1s that everyone loves so much.

I was skeptical about ABS, as new boutique computer companies come and go pretty quickly. However, having had the chance to beat up on two of their

ABS built a damn fine machine: It's stable, reasonably priced, well equipped, and it smokes. Any questions?

systems, that they seem to know what they're doing. And so, the fact that a representative from Falcon Northwest has said only positive things about this competing company speaks volumes about it. All told, there are few

reasons to not recommend this machine



By the Numbers

MANUFACTURER	ABS Computers	2.53GHz Pentium 4 Killer Rig
Model	ABS Awesome 3400	N/A
Price	\$2,099	\$3,200

SPECIFICATIONS

Operating System	Windows XP Home Edition	Windows XP Home Edition
Motherboard	ASUS A7V333	Intel D850MV
Case	Enermak	Antec Plus600
Processor	AMD Athlon XP 2200+	2.53GHz Pentium 4 with 533MHz FSB
Memory	512MB Corsair PC3200 XMS DDR	512MB Samsung DDRAM PC800
Graphics Card	128MB Nvidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	VisionTek 128MB Nvidia GeForce4 Ti 4600
Monitor	NEC MultiSync FE950+	NFC MultiSync FE1250+
Hard Drive	Dual 60GB Maxtors in RAID array	120GB IBM DeskStar 7200 rpm
Optical Drive	Pioneer 16X DVD/48X CD-ROM	Toshiba 16X DVD/48X CD-ROM
CD-ROM Drive	Plexor 40x/12x/40x	Teac 40x/12x/40x
Sound	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer
Speakers	Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5300	Cambridge SoundWorks MegaWorks 5100
Mouse	Logitech Cordless Freedom Desktop	Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer 3.0
Keyboard	Logitech Cordless Freedom Desktop	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro

BENCHMARKS

Quake III Arena 1024x768x16	226	249
Quake III Arena 1024x768x32	273	244
Quake III Arena 1600x1200x32	188	135
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	66	66
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x32	130	112
Unreal Tournament 1600x1200x32	315	343
Unreal Tournament 1600x1200x32	275	222
Unreal Tournament 1600x1200x32	166	159
Unreal Tournament 1600x1200x32	161	158
Unreal Tournament 1600x1200x32	117	116
Geomean (GameGauge) 1024x768x16	169	169
3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	339	332
MadOnion.com 3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	1341	11691
MadOnion.com 3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	7467	7443
MadOnion.com 3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	197	216
MadOnion.com 3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	232	333
MadOnion.com 3DMark 2000 SE 1024x768x32	168	168



WILLY DAINOFF

When I first saw the ABS Awesome 3400, I was blown away. It's a great machine that's priced for nearly anyone's budget.

I've been a gamer for over 10 years, and I've seen a lot of computers. But this one is different. It's a great machine that's priced for nearly anyone's budget. I've been a gamer for over 10 years, and I've seen a lot of computers. But this one is different. It's a great machine that's priced for nearly anyone's budget.



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ATI All-In-Wonder Radeon 8500

The perfect all-in-one video card...for last millennium By Christopher Null

ATI's new All-In-Wonder

ATI, www.atitech.co

ATI \$400

REQUIRES 500MHz CPU, 128MB RAM, USB port, sound card with line in input, AGP 2.x or higher, Windows 2000/ME/XP



ATI's new version of the All-In-Wonder looked obsolete the minute it hit my desk.

While it's theoretically possible that someone exists who needs this card's combination of really new and really old connectors, we're pretty sure that someone isn't going to shell out \$400 for the privilege.

The assortment of cables, discs, and manuals jammed into the box can appear overwhelming, but at its heart the All-In-Wonder Radeon 8500 is the same product it's been since the company was toiling the Rage chip (designed for Windows 98!). Basically, the AIW takes input from any A/V system and lets you send output to any A/V system. Too bad it takes a zillion cables to do it. A breakout box lets you get analog audio and video (and S-video) from a VCR, receiver, or camcorder so you can watch TV on your monitor or edit those precious childhood video tapes. You can also connect directly to cable TV or an antenna through the coaxial connector. (Also included is an RF remote control, connected to a USB port. However,

unless you intend to watch a lot of TV on your PC, the thing is pretty useless.)

Output's the same story, only in reverse: Play *Half-Life* (disc included) on your TV! Why? Because you can. Fortunately gaming with the AIW isn't the atrocity it is with most all-in-ones. Thanks to the AIW's 128MB of DDR RAM, VisionTek's GeForce4 Ti 4600 beats the AIW's frame rates by only about 10 percent.

But it's what's lacking that makes the AIW 8500 so perplexing. FireWire ports are available only on the 8500DV, which has half the VRAM of the 8500, and any user considering a \$400 video card has probably already upgraded to a digital camcorder.

While the ability to time-shift TV viewing by using your PC

as a Tivo is admittedly cool, you can buy a real Tivo for the same \$400—and you won't have to cart your computer into the living room. But if you just happen to be looking to upgrade your underpowered video card and you've got an old analog camcorder and a TV sitting right next to your PC, then hey, we've got the perfect video card for you.

VERDICT ★★★★★
Buy it now, because it'll be off the shelves by next week.

Benchmarks

	128MB VisionTek GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB ATI All-In-Wonder Radeon 8500
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32	132	102
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	65	58
Serious Sam: TSE 1024x768x16	139	120
Geometric Score	154	133
3DMark 2000	316	279
MadOnion.com 3DMark2001 SE 1600x1200x32	7413	5804

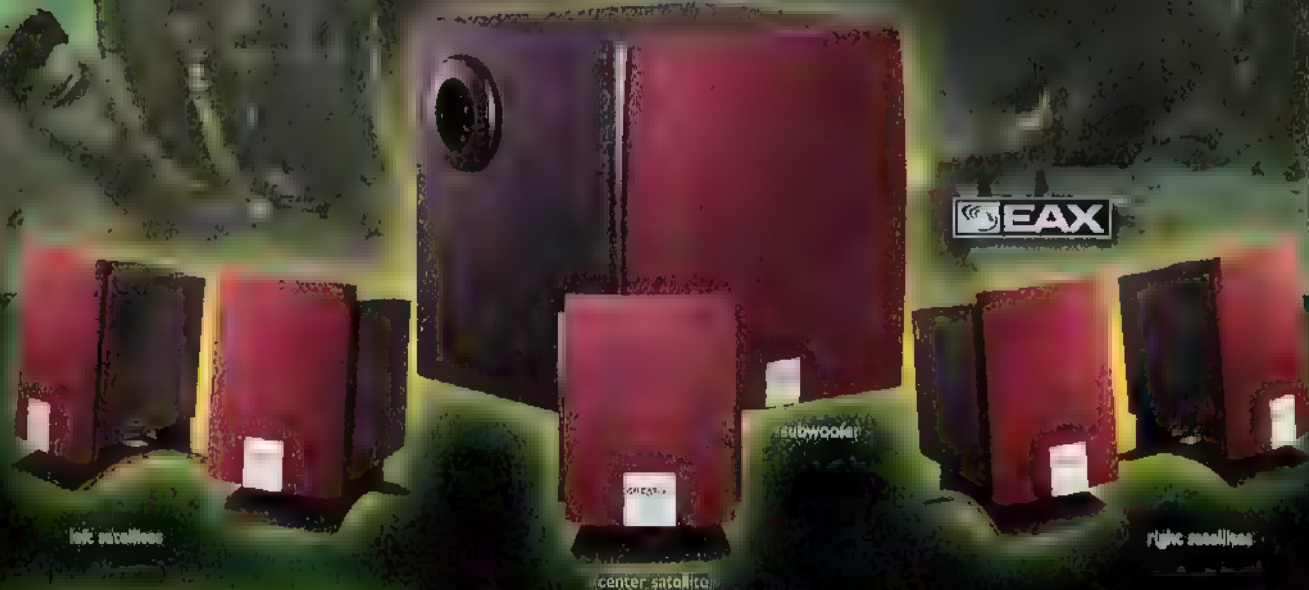
*BOTH CARDS WERE TESTED ON AN INTEL 2.4GHz PENTIUM 4 433MHz FSB, 512MB CRUCIAL PC2100 DDR RAM, WINDOWS XP HOME EDITION

Lead Your Forces to Victory

with

CREATIVE[®] INSPIRE[™] 5.1

5300



Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos image courtesy of Blizzard Entertainment



The #1 Selling 5.1 PC Gaming Speaker System!

Featuring Dolby[®] 5.1 surround sound, Creative Inspire[™] 5.1 5300 is an affordable solution for intense multi-channel gaming. So in games like Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos, you'll experience a new level of surround sound with a center satellite for in-your-face action, four electronically contoured surround satellites, and a powerful wood subwoofer. And, with the inherent ability to upmix four-channel audio to 5.1, and create 6-discrete channels when combined with a Sound Blaster[®] 5.1 sound card, it's no wonder Creative Inspire[™] 5.1 5300 is the leading 5.1-PC speaker system in America.



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CREATIVE[®]

How To: Add a Second Hard Drive

By David Huxford, Contributing Editor, and Jeff Labrecque, Contributing Editor

Adding a second hard drive has the obvious benefit of providing more elbow room for your games and "other" files, but it also can help enhance the overall performance of your system. Now that prices are starting to approach \$1 per gigabyte and you have these tips to help you along, there's no reason not to upgrade.



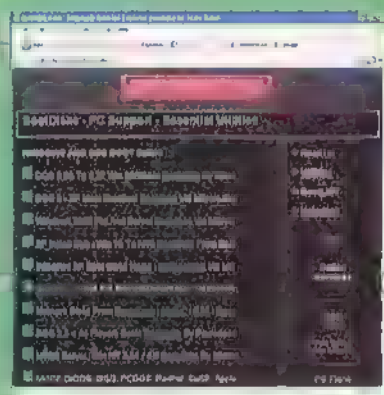
STEP 1

The first question to answer is whether a new drive will even fit in your case, especially if you use high-performance drives that are prone to getting hot. Don't stack hard drives on top of each other if possible because proper ventilation is important. If you have a tower case or plan to put one drive in a 5.25-inch bay and another in a 3.5-inch bay, make sure your IDE cable is long enough to accommodate both drives. Extra-long cable and mounting rails for putting a drive in a 5.25-inch bay are available from any decent computer store.



STEP #2

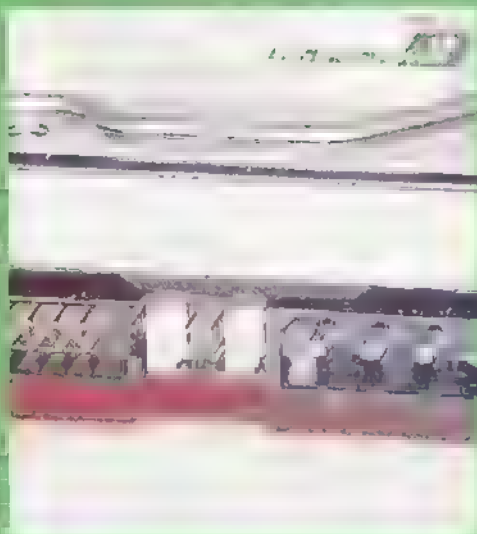
PREP YOUR PC Grab the manual that came with your PC and figure out how to check all the BIOS settings related to the new drive you are installing. Make sure the IDE channel is fully enabled (one computer we tested had Device 1 on the secondary channel disabled for no apparent reason) and that DMA is enabled. Make sure the BIOS is set to Auto-Detect all drives. Also make a Windows startup disc, or download boot discs the Internet and keep it handy in case things go pear-shaped. If you don't have a self-booting Windows CD and want startup discs with CD-ROM drivers and a copy preinstalled, head to www.bootdisk.com or www.drdr.dyndns.org and download the appropriate files.



STEP 3

Now it's time to choose a drive that is compatible with your system and decide whether to go with OEM or retail hardware. IDE works like the Spanish Armada, with all drives on a cable operating at the maximum transfer rate of the slowest unit. If you plan to throw an Ultra ATA/133 drive into a system that currently has an ATA/66 drive installed, prepare to either shell out for a separate ATA/133 controller card or take the performance hit.

OEM drives will save you a few bucks but come with nothing. Be sure you have mounting hardware and perhaps an extra jumper block. You'll also need to visit the manufacturer's Website to nab drivers and other installation software. Retail hardware will come with everything you need to install the drive and generally has a more generous warranty.

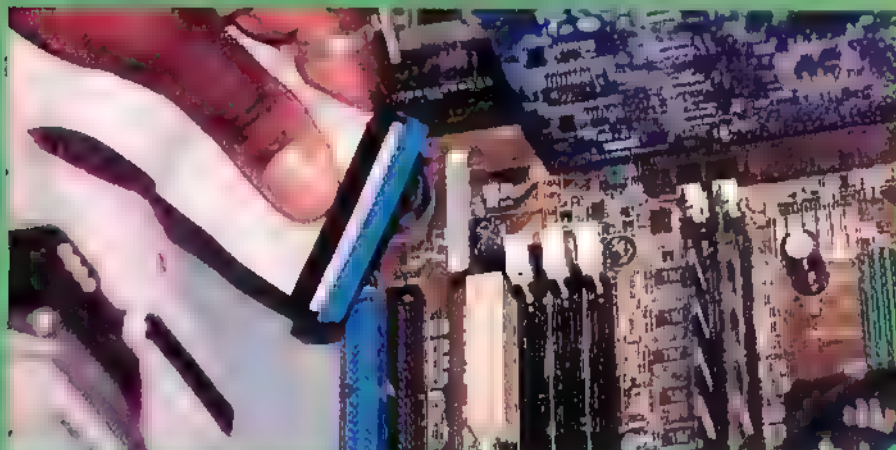


STEP 4

Before securing the drive and plugging in the IDE and power cables, you'll need to set the jumpers according to the manual's instructions. But first check your existing drive to see if its jumpers also need to be reconfigured. Some drives require different settings if they are the only drive on a cable rather than the master in a two-drive setup, so make the appropriate changes if necessary. Also look to see if the drive is jumpered for Cable Select, a feature newer drives have that automatically treats the drive at the end of the cable as the primary device and the drive in the middle of the cable as the secondary. You need a special cable to enable the technology, so don't expect it to work with an older IDE cable.

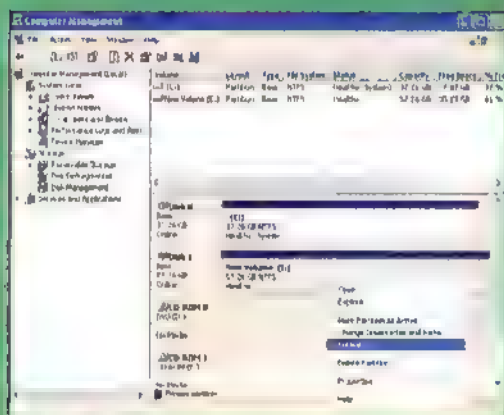
Live Under Windows XP

drive By T. Byrl Baker



IDE CABLE

Never let a hard drive and a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive share the same cable. Performance for both devices will be terrible. Either connect the new drive to the original hard drive's IDE cable or set it up with its own channel using a separate controller.

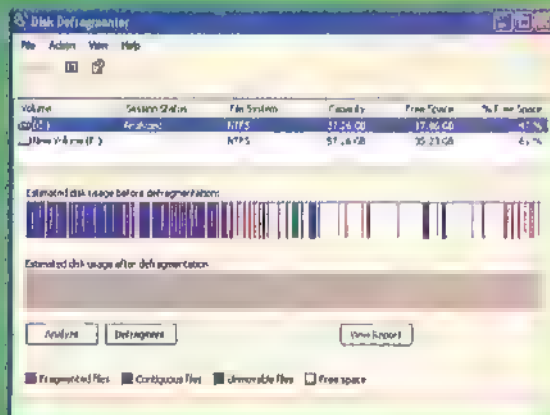
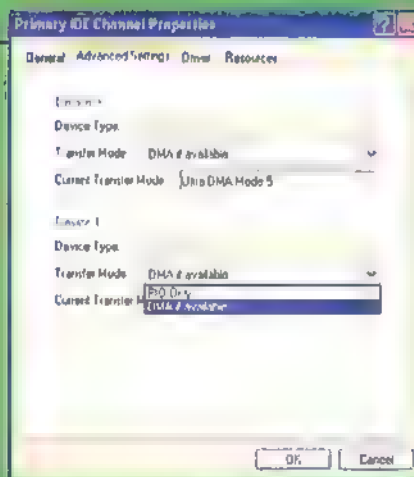


STEP #6

BOOT TEST AND FORMATTING The BIOS should recognize the new drive, but Windows won't know the drive is there until it's formatted. Use the software that came with the drive or the tools included with Windows to slap a FAT32 or NTFS file system on the new hardware. FAT32 is supposed to be better for gaming because there are fewer total clusters to address, but there isn't much of a performance hit with NTFS and it offers benefits of its own.

To format the new drive, click Start, select Control Panel, open Administrative Tools, and launch Computer Management. Click Disk Management and right-click the entry for the new drive. If the drive isn't initialized, select the entry to initialize it from the menu. If the drive is then unallocated, right-click the entry again and select New Partition. Follow the prompts and the drive will be prepared for formatting. Right-click it again, choose Format, and follow the prompts to select a file system and format the drive.

NEW DRIVE SEEM REALLY SLOW? The most likely problem is that Direct Memory Access is disabled. Right-click My Computer, select Properties, choose the Hardware tab, and click the Device Manager button. Expand the IDE ATA/ATAPI Controllers entry, right-click the entry for either the Primary or Secondary IDE Channel (depending on where you installed the drive), and select the Advanced Settings tab. Leave the device type on Auto Detection if possible and use the Transfer Mode drop-down menu to select the "DMA if available" option. Click OK, reboot, and open the Properties page for the IDE channel again to make sure the settings were applied.



Performance

can be boosted somewhat by putting the virtual memory cache on one drive and running all your software on the other.

One final note: If you formatted the drive with NTFS, don't believe the claims that the technology is immune to fragmentation. The smaller cluster size can seriously hamper drive performance if files get

scattered around, so defrag at least once a month (or preferably each time you install or remove a game).

Tech Medics

You've got questions; we've got answers By William O'Neal

This month's Tech Medics section is dedicated to David Kim, a reader whose single email asked enough pertinent questions that I didn't see it necessary to answer any others. Following is his dilemma.

Take It Away, David!

I'm trying to upgrade my computer but I'm on a budget—a low budget. With my \$350, I figure I have enough money to buy a GeForce MX420 graphics card, a 40GB 7200-rpm Maxtor hard drive, and a 1.3GHz Duron processor. With some money from my dad, I can get 512MB of DDR memory. But I was wondering:

Will Any Video Card Fit in Any Motherboard?

The quick answer is "no." But beyond that, it depends on the motherboard. A lot of newer computers ship with motherboards that have onboard graphics processors, typically AGP. The problem with many motherboards that offer on-board AGP graphics processors is that they don't have extra AGP expansion slots, although they do have extra PCI slots. However, there are a ton of manufacturers that are currently shipping motherboards that are based on Nvidia's nForce technology. These motherboards ship with onboard AGP graphics processors (32MB GeForce2MX to be exact) but also have an extra AGP slot for upgrading to something like a GeForce4Ti 4600. By now you're wondering what this all means to you. Basically, before you buy a graphics card, make sure that its interface, whether AGP or PCI, is compatible with your motherboard and that your motherboard has the appropriate slot available.

Will Any Processor Fit on Any Motherboard? In Other Words, Can I Just Put a New Processor in My Old Motherboard?

The quick answer is "no." Before you buy a CPU or a motherboard, you will have to make sure that the two are compatible. For instance, the ASUS Web page (usa.asus.com) has a drop-down menu that lets you choose a motherboard for either an Intel or AMD CPU. From there, you go to the appropriate motherboard link and it will tell you which CPUs work with that board. This can often be tricky for newer users; just because your CPU is



Not every Socket A processor will work in every Socket A motherboard.

a Socket A AMD processor, doesn't mean that just any Socket A motherboard will work. As for your motherboard, open up your machine and see what kind of board it is. Go to the manufacturer's Web page and see which CPUs will work with your board. Chances are, you'll just have to pony up for a new one.

Will Any Memory Type Fit on Any Motherboard?

No. Different motherboards accept different memory module configurations. This is why you'll often hear people arguing over DDR versus Rambus memory. When you've decided on a motherboard, you'll have to find out which kind of memory—DDR, SDRAM,

or Rambus—it accepts and buy the appropriate type.

Can I Keep the Hard Drive, Add a New One, and Use Both? (Like 20GB Plus 40GB Makes 60GB?)

Sure, you'll just have to configure the second drive's jumpers in order to make it a "slave." The manual that comes with the hard drive should tell you how to do that. With this configuration, you'll have two drives when you open "My Computer," one that's 20GB and another that's 40GB. For more information on adding a second hard drive, be sure to check out this month's "How To" on adding a second hard drive.

Killer Rigs

The best recipe for building your ultimate gaming machine By William O'Neal

This month's Killer Rigs are identical to last month's, so there's not much to say that hasn't already been said. The Power Rig is built around Intel's 2.53GHz Pentium 4 processor, replete with a superspeedy 533MHz FSB, and because the Intel D850MV motherboard that I'm runnin' is Rambus-based, I'm using 512MB of Samsung RDRAM PC800. Of course I'm also using VisionTek's 128MB Nvidia GeForce4 Ti 4600 and a Creative Labs Audigy X-Gamer sound card.

My Lean Machine is looking a little long in the tooth these days (even for a budget rig) so expect it to change next month. In the meantime, I'm sticking with the ASUS A7N266-C nForce motherboard, AMD Athlon XP 1800+ processor, 64MB VisionTek Nvidia GeForce3 Ti 200 graphics card, and a 20GB Maxtor hard drive (it is a budget machine, remember).



POWER RIG

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Operating System	Windows XP Home Edition	\$200
Motherboard	Intel D850MV	\$150
Case	Antec Plus660B	\$120
Processor	Intel 2.53GHz Pentium 4 533MHz FSB	\$600
Memory	512MB Samsung RDRAM PC800	\$200
Graphics Card	VisionTek 128MB Nvidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	\$400
Monitor	22" NEC MultiSync FE1250+	\$700
Hard Drive	120GB IBM DeskStar 7200 rpm	\$200
DVD-ROM Drive	Toshiba 16X DVD/48X CD-ROM	\$70
CD-RW Drive	Teac 40x/12x/48A	\$100
Sound Card	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer	\$100
Speakers	Cambridge SoundWorks MegaWorks 510D	\$300
Mouse	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer 3.0	\$50
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	\$50
TOTAL		\$3,240

LEAN MACHINE

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Operating System	Windows XP Home Edition	\$200
Motherboard	ASUS A7N266-C nForce	\$150
Case	Antec SX-635	\$100
Processor	AMD Athlon XP 1800+	\$150
Memory	256MB Crucial PC2100 DDR RAM	\$120
Graphics Card	64MB VisionTek Nvidia GeForce3 Ti 200	\$200
Monitor	19" NEC MultiSync FE950+	\$320
Hard Drive	20GB Maxtor D740X Ultra DMA133 7200 rpm	\$100
DVD-ROM Drive	Toshiba 16X DVD/48X CD-ROM	\$70
CD-RW Drive	N/A	N/A
Sound Card	Onboard nForce 5.1 Audio	N/A
Speakers	Logitech Z-340	\$40
Mouse	Microsoft Intellimouse Optical	\$40
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	\$50
TOTAL		\$1,540

**Dude,
you're
not
gettin' a
Dell!**

EQ TAKES TO THE STREETS!

Dragons, Warriors and Elves invade cities across the Country.

EVERQUEST

EQ INVASION TOUR 2002

Experience the magic of the extraordinary game. Meet and greet other players in your town as well as SOE's own EQ experts who can provide insight to the game. Get a free copy of the game and register to win other great prizes.

The 2002 EQ Invasion will cover more than 10,000 miles of the U.S. this summer.

The tour kicks-off in San Diego, CA on June 21st and ends on/around September 14th in Boston, MA.

The centerpiece of the 2002 EQ Invasion Tour is a modified v-nose cargo trailer. The EQ trailer is equipped with 13 Sony VAIO computers with Intel® Pentium® 4 processor, 13 Altec Lansing sound systems, and 1 world of Norrath.

Visit www.eqinvasion.com for event schedules, stories from the road and more.

TOUR SCHEDULE

CALIFORNIA

San Diego June 21, 26-30
Long Beach June 22-23
San Francisco July 3-7

ILLINOIS

Chicago June 10-14

OREGON

Portland June 16-19
Hood River July 17-20

ILLINOIS

Chicago June 24-28

OHIO

Cleveland July 31 - August 4

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis August 7-11

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia August 15-18

MARYLAND

Baltimore August 22-26

NEW YORK

New York City August 28 - September 1

CONNECTICUT

New Haven September 2-5

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston September 5-7
Cambridge September 8-10
Medford September 12-14

*All dates are subject to change.

more
power
to
play



Learn the way



Gamer's Edge

Winning for dummies Edited by Anthony Nguyen

Star of All Forces

by
Anthony Nguyen



DIRTIEST TRICK O' THE MONTH

Here's a nice set of tricks for *Jedi Knight II* that can help make you the slickest padawan online. Tricks for current games will earn you schwag, like *Dungeon Siege*.

The first trick is what I call the Saber Throw-Pull. If done correctly, this move will get you a guaranteed hit on your opponent. First make sure that your Force Pull is beefed up as much as it can be. Then throw the light-saber at your opponent. Seconds before it hits, perform a Force Pull—your enemy will defend against the Pull and be left wide open for your incoming saber.

Next is a move I call the Pull Back Slice/Stab. Once again, make sure that your Force Pull is beefed up as much as possible. When an opponent is at a medium-lightsaber distance and is Force Pulled or Pushed, they will automatically be forced to the ground. When the match starts, rush your opponent

and, when within a medium saber's length, perform the Force Pull. When they fall to the ground, immediately do a 180, and then press Back and Attack to perform the Back Slice/Stab. As long as the opponent is not using Force Absorb, they'll be vulnerable to this move. You can even do this while rolling to add to the surprise. Result: unblockable death blow, especially with Heavy saber style. In that style, your opponent can have a full shield and will still die.

Last are a couple of moves that make a good one-hit kill in duels with no Force Powers.

The first one I call the Kick Back Slice/Stab. You must have your jump powers to at least Level 2 or 3. The move is very simple: You rush up to your opponent and hit the Jump button twice while holding Forward to perform a kick. This will knock your opponent down; then you rush up, do a 180, and perform a

Back Slice/Stab.

The second one is used with Light saber style. You run at your opponent and then perform the Jumping Lightsaber Lunge (while jumping, hold Shift and then hit Forward and Attack); usually this will get you a nice slice on your opponent, or they will move forward or attack and will then slide under you. When this happens, most players will run up on your rear to give you a hearty slice to your back. But they won't get very far if you perform the Back Stab and they impale themselves on your saber. Everyone will compliment you on your obvious skill. —Crown

You just snagged yourself a copy of *Dungeon Siege*. Go use your Jedi knight melee skills in Chris Taylor's world! We're now giving away Collector's Editions of *Morrowind*. Write in a Dirty Trick to claim one as yours.





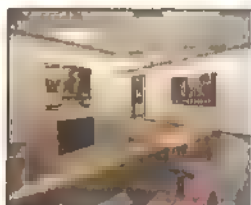
MAPS AND
STRATEGIES
FOR
MULTIPLAYER
MISSIONS

SUM OF ALL FEARS

A PRIMA EXCLUSIVE

M4/Shotgun

Combining the M4 with a shotgun makes this weapon an ideal choice for COB situations where noise is not an issue. The shotgun allows for quick room entry, while the M4 provides excellent firepower.



MP01: RSE OFFICES

The single-level office building presents a big challenge. The hallways become kill zones when they are used for fire lanes to cover all of the doorways along them. Grenades and the grenade launcher work well on this map. Exit the building to get around choke points or to flank the enemy. Put on night-vision goggles in the dimly lit offices and for outdoor operations. The high cubicle walls make throwing a grenade over them difficult—it might bounce back toward you.

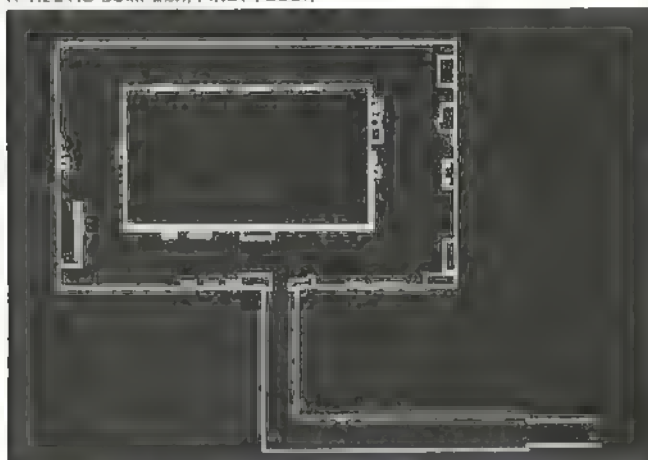


SUM OF ALL FEARS

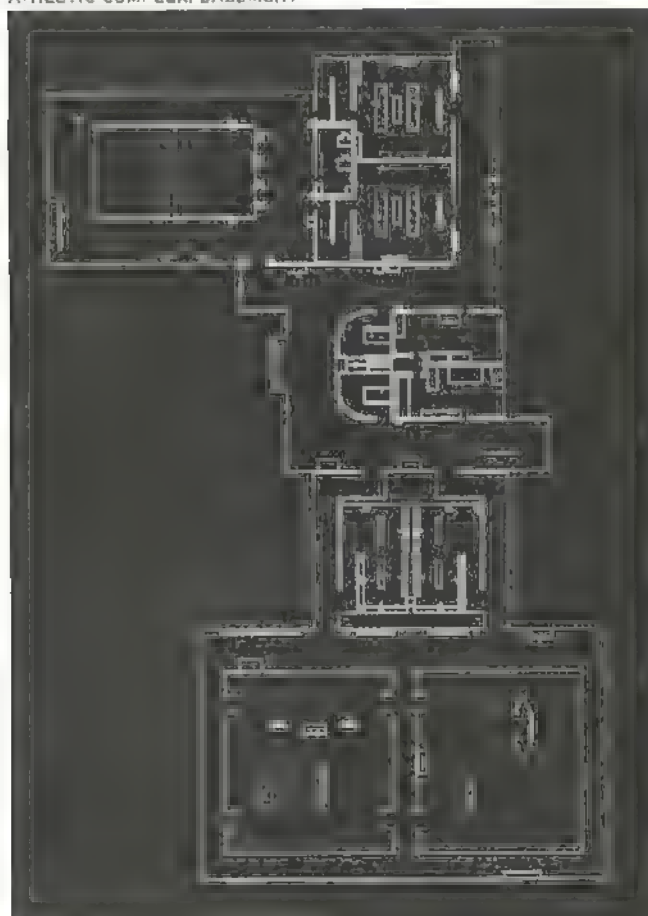
MP02: ATHLETE

The athletic complex is primarily all one level with a small basement that surrounds the pool. Two stairways access the basement, making it fairly easy to defend. The swimming pool area and the gymnastics room are the two main rooms. The gymnastics room contains an elevated platform you can crouch behind for cover. These large rooms have at least two access points. The turns and corners of the restroom and locker rooms present a challenge. But the main hallways offer good clear lines of fire, allowing you to keep enemies boxed into one area.

ATHLETIC COMPLEX, FIRST FLOOR



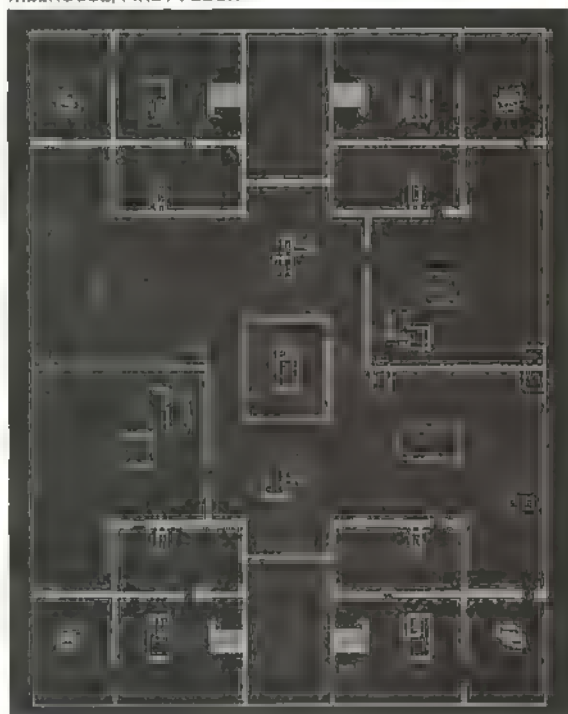
ATHLETIC COMPLEX, BASEMENT



MP03: KILLHOUSE

The Killhouse complex is comprised of two main fortresses that can be divided into a total of four mini-forts. Access between the two main forts is across an open area with lots of walls and crates to provide cover. A small building in the middle of the map serves as a holding position, but it's tough to defend and vulnerable to grenades. To control this map, secure one corner and slowly expand. Be careful to cover all paths to your secured area so enemies cannot get in behind you.

KILLHOUSE, FIRST FLOOR



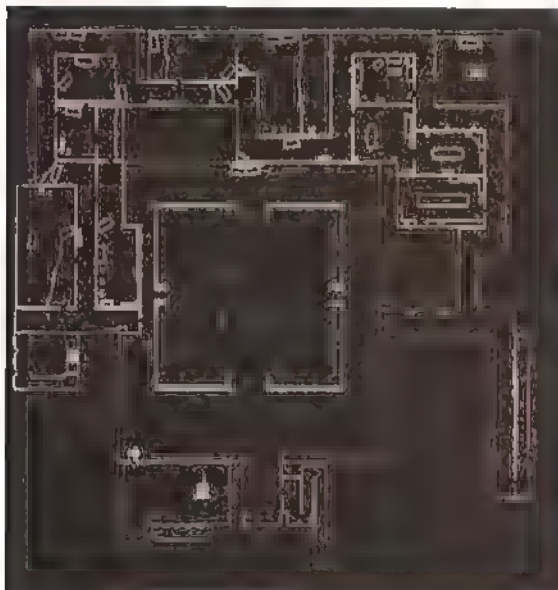
KILLHOUSE, SECOND FLOOR



MP04: PARKING GARAGE

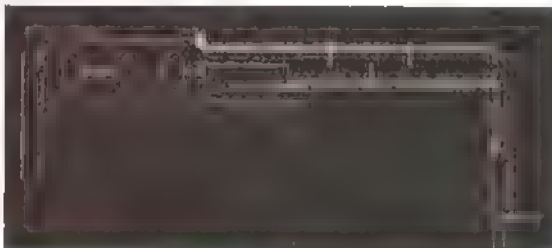
This is a tough map. To move through the wide-open level, use vehicles and other objects for cover. Carry carbines or assault rifles because most fighting takes place at medium range. Set up fire positions near cars and other types of cover. Frag grenades work great on this level since you can throw them right over obstacles to take out enemies on the other side. Just be careful—frag grenades work against you as well.

PARKING GARAGE

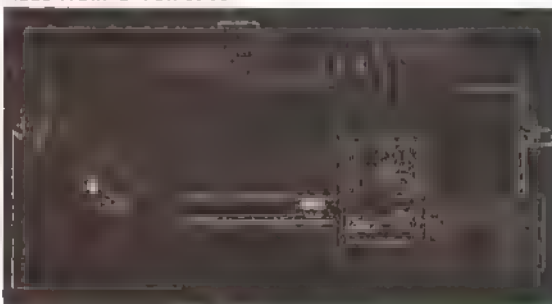
**MP05: RESERVOIR**

The reservoir map contains open outdoor areas, buildings, and tunnels. Some of the stairways and ramps are long. The tunnels are the easiest to defend; some long straight passages provide good fire lanes. However, a sniper positioned at the top of the dam structure can dominate the area below. Position players in the buildings and shoot through the windows at anyone crossing the bridge.

RESERVOIR, LOWER LEVEL



RESERVOIR, UPPER LEVEL

**MP06: ART GALLERY**

The art gallery, one of the smallest maps in the game, provides fast and deadly missions. Large openings expose every room. The only safe places are the corridors along the front of the building that access the office rooms. The offices may seem safe, but they

sometimes have only one entrance, becoming death traps. To assault enemies in an office, blast in the door with a frag grenade, then send more grenades through the doorway.

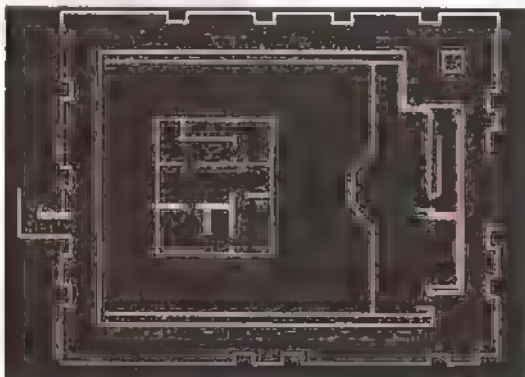
**MP07: TRAINING**

The training center map is a lot of fun. It combines the outdoor range areas with small structures and the main building. The downstairs hallways surround the central killhouse and provide access to the ranges. Upstairs, you can fire through the windows and even shoot down through the grates in the floor at enemies below; they can't detect you until you start firing. The long hallways are easily covered from a distance.

TRAINING, FIRST FLOOR



TRAINING, SECOND FLOOR



GAMER'S EDGE

GRAND



THEFT AUTO III

Even though *Grand Theft Auto III* encourages multiple approaches to the same solution, you quickly find out that you can use either the Steve McQueen method of finishing a profitable mission or the pathetic Hayden Christensen method. * * Here's how to be the best virtual mob thug since Paulie Walnuts, from getting through the hardest missions to getting the best car. * *

TAKING OUT THE LAUNDRY

LOCATION: Portland

CHARACTER: Toni Fiorio

Toni tells you to destroy three Triad laundry vans. He suggests you stop by B-Ball's place first and pick up some grenades. Extra explosives are always nice, but if you take Toni's advice too literally and actually attempt to chuck grenades at the moving van, this mission is a real pain. Instead, get yourself a nice oversized vehicle like a semi, a city bus, or a fire truck. Use it to chase down and cut off one of the laundry vans. While the Triad driver attempts to maneuver around your impromptu roadblock, hop out of your vehicle, carjack the laundry van, and drive away. Now the van is at your mercy; you can ram it into a wall until it explodes, take it to the crusher by B-Ball's, or park it near a cliff and use another car to push it into the



At first, you won't be able to run very far without having to take a break to gulp in air. By running a lot, you'll eventually build up your stamina to the point where you should be able to run a couple of blocks without a problem.

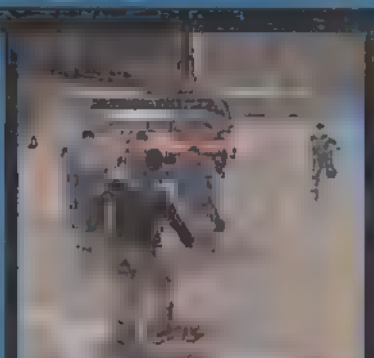
water. Hell, you can even drive to a secluded spot, get out, and blow it up with grenades if you really want. Repeat this procedure with the other two vans.

TURISMO

LOCATION: Portland

CHARACTER: El Burro

This is the first optional pay phone mission you receive and one of the toughest missions in the entire game. It's a straightforward checkpoint race through the streets of Portland against three fast, virtually indestructible cars. The most important tip for beating this mission: Do it early in the game or not at all. Once you've unlocked the second island, all the gangs in Portland will be gunning for you. This race is hard enough without Mafia henchmen blasting you with shotguns the entire time. The best car for the job is the standard police cruiser. It may not be quite as fast as the Diablo Stallion or the Banshee (both



This illustrates both the correct positioning of the roadblock for the Turismo mission and why you shouldn't attempt the roadblock once the Triads are mad at you.

KEEPING IT REAL ON THE MEAN STREETS OF LIBERTY CITY

STRATEGY BY
ERIK WOLPAW



STATE OF EMERGENCY

Two cheat codes will turn *GTA III* into a full-fledged riot simulator. First, type in "WEAPONSFORALL." This gives every pedestrian a random weapon. Typing in "ITSALLGOINGMAAAD" will then encourage them to use these weapons on each other. Make sure you don't save the game with these codes activated, as there appears to be no way to shut them off.



Viewing the carnage from a safe distance.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE CHEETAH

In the Turismo mission, all three of your opponents drive Cheetahs. But they aren't the standard model—each one is bulletproof, fireproof, and explosion proof. This is the only time in the game when this great car is available. Unfortunately, even if you manage to get one trapped, you can't carjack it because the doors are locked. With a little persistence, it is possible to add one of these cars to your collection. Attempt Turismo with a tank and use it to blow up one of the Cheetahs. Wait until the other racers cross the finish line and the mission is over. Then, using the tank as a bulldozer, push the burnt-out carcass back to your safe house and into the garage. Don't lose sight of the wrecked Cheetah during the trip, or it will disappear. After you save your game, a brand-new, unlocked, bulletproof Cheetah will be sitting in your garage.

available in Portland), but it can take a real beating and isn't saddled with the squirrelly ass-end of a lightweight sports car. More important, when you run the siren, pedestrian vehicles will get out of your way, providing a much clearer path from one checkpoint to another. The best way to hijack a police car is to approach it from the passenger side door. It's locked, but this little maneuver will prevent the officer from jumping out and walk around the car to grab you. While he's coming around one side, you can sprint around the other, jump in the open driver-side door, and speed away. Make

sure you hit the Pay-and-Spray before you start the race. If you want to cheat a little (since you're a career criminal, why not?), use a few stolen city buses to create a roadblock in front of the starting line. While the other racers attempt to maneuver around the buses, you should be able to jump out into a quick lead. If you're willing to cheat in a more legitimately cheatlike fashion, you can get yourself a free tank by typing "GIVEUSATANK" at any point during the game. Any opponent you run with your new tank will explode. This turns the race into more of a demolition derby.

UNDER SURVEILLANCE

LOCATION: Staunton Island
CHARACTER: Asuka Kasen

Asuka asks you to take out three surveillance teams. This mission really requires a sniper rifle, so stop by AmmuNation and pick one up. Make sure you buy plenty of rounds, just in case. This mission is timed, so do your shopping before you go see Asuka. As in Triads and Tribulations, the first two targets are straightforward. The last group of enemies is a little trickier. If you arrive at their location on the radar and still can't find them, it's because the seven members of the surveillance team are high up on balconies in a building across the street from Kenji's Casino. Your best vantage point is the helicopter pad on top of the casino. Using the parked helicopter for cover, waste them *Virtua-Cop* style.



An easy way to make quick cash is to turn *GTA III* into Crazy Taxi.

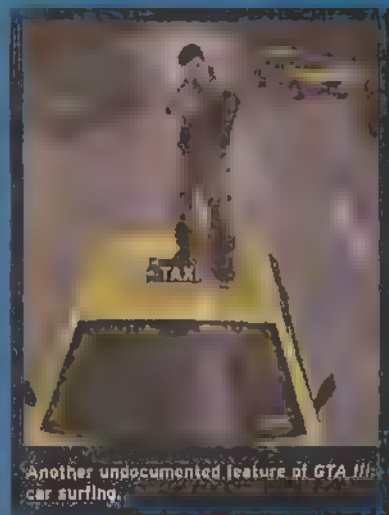
ARMS SHORTAGE

LOCATION: Staunton Island
CHARACTER: Ray Machowski

In this mission, you have to meet one of Ray's buddies at his army surplus store in Rockford and then help him defend it against a massive onslaught of Cartel foot soldiers. This mission can be a real pain if you approach it as a straight-up firefight. The easiest way for you to win is to set up a vehicular defense perimeter during the short period between meeting Ray's buddy and the arrival of the Cartel.

There's a large flatbed army truck parked inside the compound. Jump into it and quickly maneuver it so that it blocks the main gate. Next, hop into the car you arrived in and move it so that it blocks the alleyway to the left of the warehouse. With the two entrances now sealed, you can easily eliminate the Cartel members by tossing grenades over the gate.

If you don't manage to completely block the alley before the fight starts, don't



Another undocumented feature of *GTA III*: car surfing.

panic. Guard it and kill the one or at most two enemies who come through it. When the alley is clear, you can take out the main force on the other side of the flatbed truck.

PLASTER BLASTER

LOCATION: Staunton Island

CHARACTER: Ray Machowski

It turns out that someone you thought you'd killed in a previous mission is actually still alive and scheduled to give a deposition. You have to chase down the ambulance he's in and shut him up permanently. When the ambulance spots you, you'll get a two-star wanted rating. After you ram the ambulance a few times, the squealer will fall out of the back door and into the road. The full body cast he's in as a result of your last encounter makes him completely incapable of moving, so he'll just lie

there in the middle of the road. Unfortunately, the cast also acts as a result of armor, which means killing him is going to take some time and firepower. By the time he's in the road, your wanted rating will probably be up to at least three stars, hampering any methodical attempts to crack his plaster shield. Luckily, this mission isn't timed and he's not going anywhere. You can temporarily abandon him, drive to the Pay-and-Spray to get the cops off your tail, and return at your leisure to blow him with grenades or slowly crush him beneath the wheels of a truck.

WAKA-GASHIRA WIPEOUT



LOCATION: Staunton Island

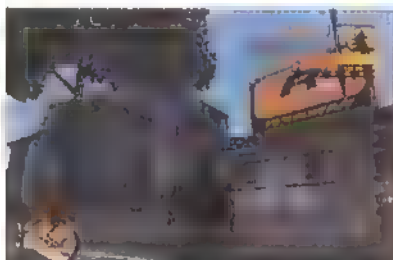
CHARACTER: Donald Love

If you want to complete 100 percent of the game, do not do this mission until you've completed all of Kenji's missions. Because the goal here is to murder Kenji, once you succeed, any unfinished Kenji missions will become permanently unavailable.

THE TANK

PART ONE

By far the most formidable vehicle in the GTA3 universe is the tank. It's virtually indestructible and can cause other cars to explode simply by bumping into them. Unfortunately, the tank isn't easy to acquire. First, you have to complete enough missions to unlock the third island, Shoreside Vale, otherwise you won't be able to antagonize the cops enough to earn a six-star wanted rating. Next, you'll have to be fully stocked on health and armor and have at least a rocket launcher and plenty of grenades. Find a safe spot where the cops can't reach you, such as the roof of a building. There's a great perch in Portland near the entrance to Chinatown—on the roof of the building with the Rockstar billboard (see below). Once you're up there, start tossing grenades onto the street. Pretty soon, the cops will arrive and suggest that you give yourself up. Instead, toss grenades at them. This will earn you an extra star or two, and the cops will begin hassling you with helicopters. Every time you hear a chopper approaching, destroy the helicopter with a rocket from your launcher. This cycle of violence should garner you six stars, at which point the National Guard will come after you with their tanks, a few of which they'll drive into the dead-end alley behind your sniper's nest. They've then fallen into your trap. Drop grenades into the alley to clear out any stray cops or soldiers who might be miking around their stuck vehicles. Then run down the fire escape, jump into one of the abandoned tanks, and haul ass back to your Staunton Island safe house. Finally, save the game and the tank is yours! Alternatively, you can just type "GIVEUSATANK" at any point during the game, and a tank will fall from the sky, often landing on and crushing a hapless pedestrian. This, however, is cheating.



The roof of this building is one of the best spots for luring tanks.

FREE WEAPONS!

As you explore Liberty City, you'll come across hidden packages. There are 100 in all, and for every 10 you gather, a permanent weapon pickup is placed at each of your safe houses. Here's a list of all the package thresholds and their associated bonus:

- 10: Pistol
- 20: Uzi
- 30: Grenade
- 40: Shotgun
- 50: Armor
- 60: Molotov cocktail
- 70: AK-47
- 80: Sniper rifle
- 90: M-16
- 100: Rocket launcher

Every time you grab a weapon icon, it disappears and then reappears after a few minutes. However, you can force all the weapon icons to regenerate immediately by running to the back wall of your safe house's garage. If you manage to accrue 9,999 units of ammo for any weapon, it'll effectively become magical and will no longer use ammo when fired.



Like a butterfly in reverse, this beautiful helicopter is in the process of turning into an ugly pile of flightless burning junk.

ESPRESSO-2-GO

LOCATION: Shoreside Vale

CHARACTER: Lucia

This is one of the most frustrating missions in the entire game. You have eight minutes to destroy nine espresso-front Cartel SPANK stands. Unfortunately, the stands are spread across all three islands. Even more unfortunately, they don't show up on your radar until you're almost right next to them, which can lead to a lot of frustrating trial and error. Here are their locations and the best order in which to take them down.

ST. PETER'S ISLAND

- No. 1: In the courtyard of the Cartel Casino
- No. 2: In the courtyard of the Cartel Casino

Salvatore's mansion

STAUNTON ISLAND

- No. 3: In a courtyard right next to the car park in Newport
- No. 4: Inside Belleville Park
- No. 5: In front of the Bedford Point church
- No. 6: On the sidewalk about a block away from the church
- No. 7: Near the plaza with the star-shaped statue, right down the street from Kenji's Casino

SHORESIDE VALE

- No. 8: At the subway entrance near Francis International Airport
- No. 9: At the hospital in Pike Creek





MARKED MAN

LOCATION: Shoreside Vale.

CHARACTER: Ray Machowski.

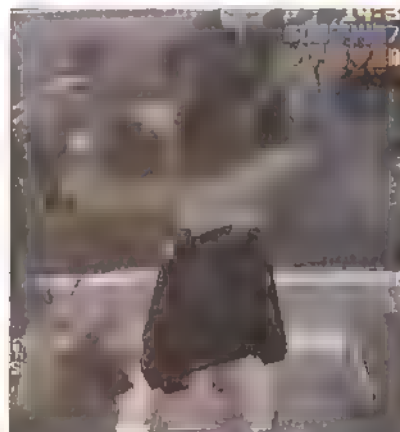
This mission is straightforward. Drive Ray to the front of Francis International Airport. The important part is that once you've done this, Ray gives you the keys to his weapons stash in the Newport section of Staunton Island. Inside the lockup is a bulletproof Patriot. This is your one and only chance to acquire this incredibly useful vehicle, so make sure you store it back at one of your safe houses.



THE TANK

PART TWO (NOW MAKE IT FLY)

Without a doubt, the most rewarding activity you and your tank can share, other than ramming into other cars, is going on recreational flights. Unbelievable as it sounds, you can actually get the tank airborne for semicontrolled adventures in the skies above Liberty City. To do this, you need to activate a cheat by typing in "CHITTYCHITTYBB" at any time during the game. You'll know it worked if the phrase "Cheat Enabled" appears in the upper-left corner of the screen. This code effectively gives all the vehicles "floaty" physics. To take off, first rotate the turret so that it's facing backward. Next, find a straight stretch of road with some sort of small bump or a drop off at the end of it. Drive down the road while firing your cannon behind you. By the time you reach the end, you'll have reached escape velocity and the tank will start rising off the ground. You can use the turn keys to sort of control your flight. With practice, you'll be able to stay airborne for a pretty long time. You should even be able to fly from one island to another. In fact, the flying tank can take you to sections of the city you haven't unlocked yet. Make sure to fly over the stadium on Staunton Island for a vulgar surprise.



Flight of the flying tank.



The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind

Making mad money and more in *Morrowind* By Ron Dulin

Morrowind isn't about leveling and gaining power so much as it's about exploring and playing a character. To this end, the pregenerated character classes are mostly good, and whether you want to play a fighter, mage, or thief, you'll find one with a nice mix of skills. Some classes, though, are simply more powerful than others. Witchblades, for instance, have one of the most powerful skill combinations: conjuration and enchanting.

If you're interested in a more well-rounded character, it's possible to create a custom class with the most powerful skills from each specialization. You'll need to decide whether your primary focus will be combat, magic, or stealth. Depending on which you choose, you'll want to select a race and a birth sign that bolster your strengths or balance your weaknesses.

For a well rounded hybrid character, choose these 10 skills and divide them between major and minor as you see fit: Alchemy, Alteration, Armorer Block, Conjuration, Enchant, Light (or heavy) armor, Short (or long) blade, Sneak, Speechcraft.

Swap out light armor for heavy if you want, but make sure you're planning for a character with a high strength rating. Using this template,

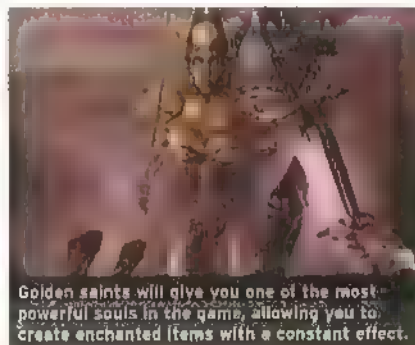
you'll be able to fight, cast, or thieve as needed.

A Brief Guide to Enchanting

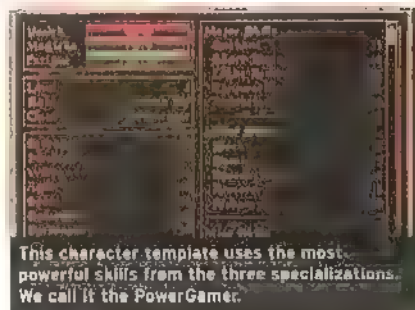
Enchanting is one of the most useful skills in the game. It not only allows you to create powerful items, it also reduces the cost of paying other people to enchant items for you. Enchanting requires three ingredients: a spell, a trapped soul, and an item to enchant.

In order to enchant an item with a particular effect, you must know a spell with said effect; if you want an ax that does fire damage, then you'll need a spell that does fire damage. A spell's power doesn't affect the enchantment's power, so any old spell with the right effect will do. You don't even have to be proficient at the spell—you just have to know it.

To trap a soul, you must cast the Soultrap spell on a monster before killing it, and you must have an empty soulgem of sufficient quality in your inventory. The quality of the soul will affect the amount of charges the item has. The highest-level souls—such as golden saints and ascended sleepers—can be caught only with grand soulgems. These souls can be used to imbue items with "constant effect" enchantments, such as permanent bonuses to your abilities and statistics.



Golden saints will give you one of the most powerful souls in the game, allowing you to create enchanted items with a constant effect.



This character template uses the most powerful skills from the three specializations. We call it the PowerGamer.

Items have enchantment limits. A limit is a numeric value that determines how strong an effect can be. Exquisite clothing and jewelry are the best items to use. They have much higher enchantment values than weapons or armor, so they're ideal for constant effect enchantments. Give yourself permanent bonuses to strength or intelligence, or just boost your most useful skills above their max.

Weapons can be made very powerful through enchanting. Try creating a weapon that heals you or paralyzes your opponent or does both. If you plan to do a fair amount of enchanting, you might even want to create a secondary weapon that automatically casts Soultrap.

To keep your soulgems full, a good enchanter should invest in summoning spells. Just summon a monster, cast Soultrap on it, and then kill it. It's a cheap trick, but it works.

Selling Valuable Items

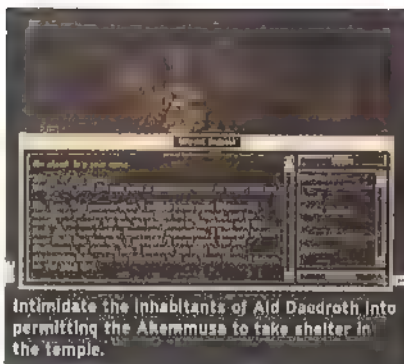
Paying for enchantments is expensive, and one of the more frustrating things about *Morrowind* is that merchants never have enough gold to buy your valuable items. But there is a way to sell them, and you don't have to cheat to do it.

To sell valuable items, you just need to do a little creative bartering. First, find an NPC with a nice chunk of spending money (a few suggestions are listed below). Sell the merchant a few items that will clean out their cash reserves. Rest or wait for 24 hours, and the merchant will regain their gold supply. Sell some more items, and then wait another 24 hours. After you've sold a significant number of items, buy them all back with the money you've earned. This will give the merchant enough cash to purchase your high-ticket items. You can then repeat the process to sell back all the less-valuable items, giving you plenty of cash.

Don't use equipable items you wish to keep as "placeholder" sales when dealing with some merchants. They might equip the item themselves, so you won't be able to buy it back.

These are some of the wealthier merchants.

Creepers: You'll find him



upstairs at Ghorak's Manor in Caldera, and he has 5,000 gold. He's the best merchant for this money-making technique—he's easy to locate and will give you almost full value when buying and selling.

Ababael Timsar-Dadlsun: This Ashlander has 9,000 gold. He's located in the Zaniba camp, in the center of the Grazelands. Despite his high cash reserve, he isn't the ideal merchant because he typically offers you far less than the base value for items, even if he likes you.

Mudcrab: The inebriated, talking mudcrab has a whopping 10,000 gold. He's found north of Bal Fell, on a tiny island directly to the east of the Mzahnnh ruins. He's camouflaged by the landscape, and he doesn't have a name, so you'll have to search carefully for him. He'll buy items at full value, but he's tough to find.

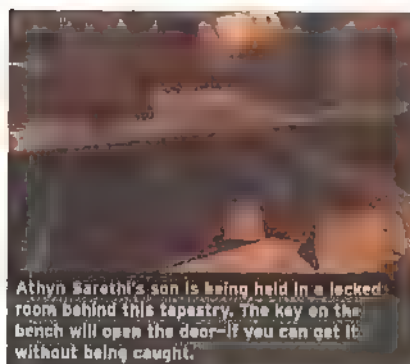
The Blades, Quests and Nerevarine Trials

There are hundreds of quests in *Morrowind*, and you'll never see all of them in a single game. If you decide to follow the main story, though, you'll have to do all of the tasks for the Blades and later, the Trials of the Nerevarine. Most of these quests are very straightforward, but there are a few that might give you some trouble. Here are some suggestions for finishing the more confusing quests of the main story.

Finding the Dwemer Puzzle Box Your first quest for the Blades is also one of the most confusing. You need to find a

Dwemer Puzzle Box for Hasphat before he will help you. If you can't find the box in Arkngthand, you're looking too hard. The box is rather easy to find. In a small room near the entrance to the ruins.

When you enter Arkngthand, go down the entry ramp and turn left at the bottom. You'll see a stone ramp leading up to a small balcony. Climb up this ramp and go through the door to the Cells of Hollow Hand.



You'll need to fight a guard; he's pretty tough if you're just starting out. The puzzle box is located on a shelf to your left.

The Ashlander informant Caius will ask you to find an Ashlander named Hassour Zarnsubani in Ald'Ruhn. He's in the Ald Krar Inn, and you'll need to descend a somewhat hard-to-see staircase located to the right of the bar.

When you speak to Hassour, ask him what he'd like as a thoughtful gift. He likes poetry, so stop by the nearby bookstore and ask the merchant about poetry books. He'll make some suggestions, and you can buy (or steal) any of these to present to Hassour.

The Sixth House Base You must find a Sixth House base near Gnaar Mok and kill Dagoth Gares. The base is in a cave called Ilunibi on one of the islands in the small chain north of Gnaar Mok. The entrance is on the northernmost tip of the north island.

Finding and killing Dagoth Gares isn't too difficult. He's in the section of the base called Soul's Rattle. Unfortunately, he'll infect you with Corpus as a parting gesture. While you are infected, your attributes change and most NPCs refuse to speak with you. Caius will send you to Tel Fyr to find a cure.

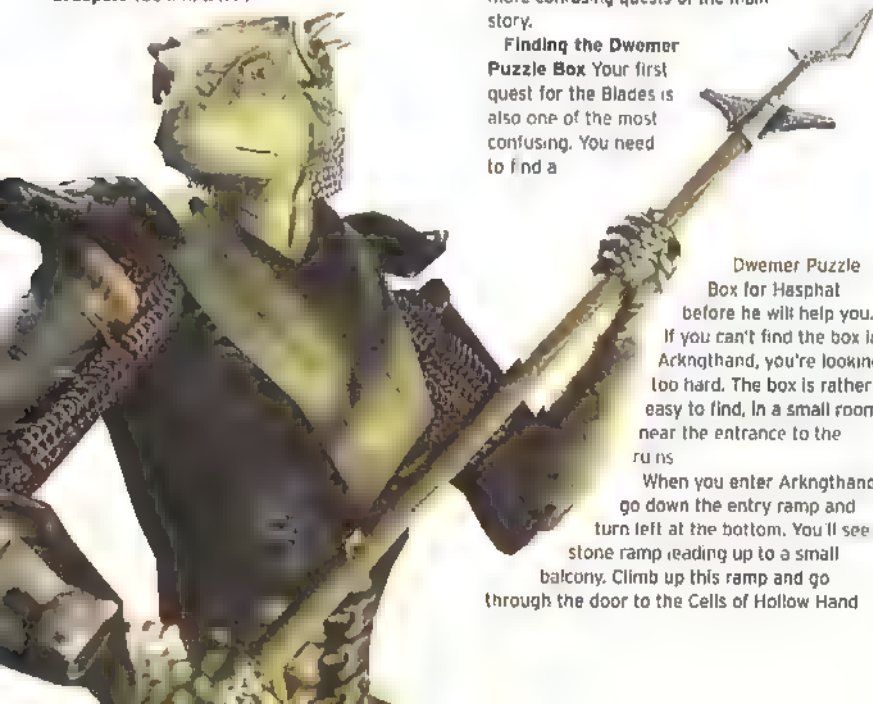
Go to the mage's guild in Balmora, and then teleport to Wolverine Hall in Sadrith Mora. If you can't levitate, be sure to buy Rising Force potions before leaving for Tel Fyr, as there are no stairs in most wizard towers. Tel Fyr is a large tower on an island due east from Sadrith Mora.

In Tel Fyr, find Divayth Fyr. Talk to him, and he'll send you down to his Corpusarium to retrieve some boots. Don't fight any of the diseased; if they hit you, keep walking. Once you find Yagrum Bagarn (he's the portly inmate with the mechanical legs), return the boots to Divayth and he'll give you the cure.

The Fourth Nerevarine Trial The fourth trial is lengthy and divided into numerous subquests. You must get the three Dunmer Great Houses to recognize you as Horator. This requires several steps for each house.

For House Hlaalu, speak to Curio in Vivec. He will give you directions to the other Hlaalu councilors scattered throughout the southwestern portion of the continent. The most difficult to find is Dram Bero. He is located in Vivec, in the plaza of St. Olms. He lives in the haunted mansion; break in to find him. Also, to gain the support of Orvas Dren's lackeys, you will need to kill Orvas at his plantation near Pelagiad.

All of the House Redoran councilors are



GAMER'S EDGE

located in Ald'Ruhn. In order to win their support, you will need to rescue Athyn Sarethi's son. He is located in Bolvyn Venim's manor, behind a door hidden by a tapestry. Wait until the nearby guard is out of sight, pick the lock, and lead the young man back to his father. Once you've rescued him, all of House Redoran will support you except Venim. Challenge Venim to a duel, and then go to the arena in Vivec. Defeat him to be named Horator.

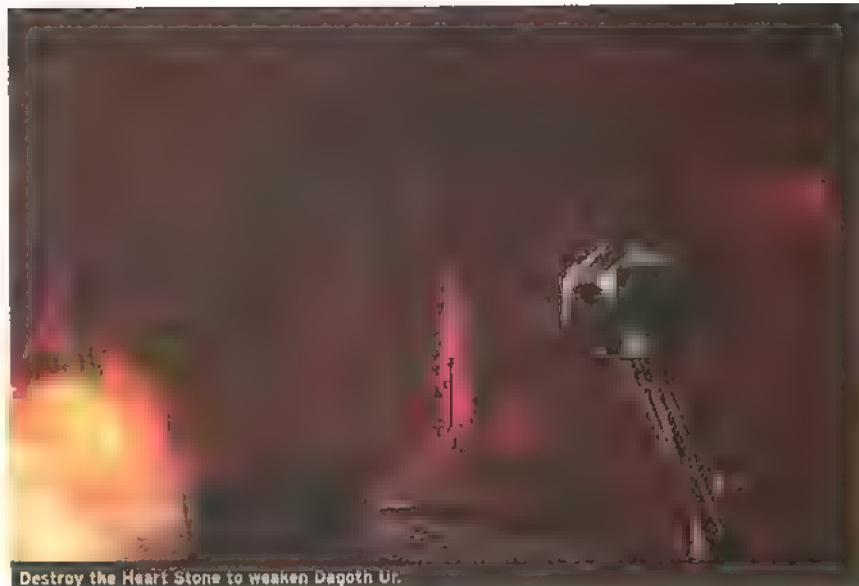
Winning the support of House Telvanni will take travelling. If your character is male, you'll need to find a way to charm Dratha or she won't speak with you. You'll also need to charm or persuade Neloth, and you'll have to kill Gothren outright.

The Fifth Nerevarine Trial There are four Ashlander tribes, and each will need to name you Nerevarine. The Urshilaku are easy to convince. The Ahemmusa need a safe haven. Go north from their camp to the ruins of Ald Daedroth. You can convince the inhabitants to allow the tribe to camp there—you won't need to kill them. Lead the wise woman to Ald Daedroth, and the Ahemmusa will give you their support.

The Zainab require something a bit more difficult to get—a Telvanni bride. Follow the wise woman's advice and go to Tel Aruhn. Speak to the slave master and get the items the bride requires—exquisite clothing and Telvanni Bug Perfume. Pay the slave master and lead the slave back to the Zainab camp to gain their support.

You'll need to kill the current Ashkhan of the Erabenimsum and his supporters. Be sure to take the Robe of Erur-Dan, the Axe of Aran-Ammu, and the Heart of Fire when they are dead. Speak to Han-Ammu and give him the items. He'll accept the position of Ashkhan and name you the Nerevarine.

The Sixth Nerevarine Trial The sixth trial isn't difficult, but it can be confusing. You'll need to decode a cryptic passage of the Lost Prophecies and then use the clues to find the



Destroy the Heart Stone to weaken Dagoth Ur.

Cavern of the Incarnate.

The cavern is located to the northeast of Red Mountain. To reach the cavern, follow the road east from the Urshilaku camp, past the Zerqon-pal temple. Just before you reach the Grazelands, there is a road heading south. This road will lead directly to the entrance of the cavern. You can also find it by going west from the Nchuleft ruins. The door to the Cavern of the Incarnate will open only at dawn or dusk.

Defeating Dagoth Ur To fully defeat Dagoth Ur, you need to sever his tie to the Heart of Lorkhan using Sunder, Keening, and Wraithguard (the tools of Kagrenac). You can get Wraithguard in Vivec, and you'll need to find the others by defeating the lesser Dagoths in the ruins on Red Mountain.

When you have all of Kagrenac's tools, you're ready to find the Heart. Make your way to Dagoth Ur, who's in the center of Red Mountain. Once there, fight your way down to the Chamber of Akulakhan.

Once you're in the chamber, equip Wraithguard and Sunder. Be sure to boost your hit points as much as possible before equipping Wraithguard. Make your way to the Heart itself, and then hit it with Sunder. Equip Keening and slash at the Heart. Dagoth Ur will be easily defeated after you've destroyed the Heart.

Once Dagoth Ur is dead, you'll want to leave the ruin by foot so that you can speak to Azura. You are now free to continue your adventures, though with the added bonus of being recognized as the Nerevarine by most of the world.

PLUG-INS AND MODS

The plug-ins and mods can significantly alter the game, adding new quests, regions, races, classes, and almost anything and everything you can imagine. There are already hundreds available and just browsing through the libraries is interesting. Some of the best mods simply tweak the existing game to make it more fun.

Here are a few useful mods.

- One of Bethesda's official plug-ins, Bitter Coast Sounds adds new sound effects and a new dragonfly to the Bitter Coast region.
- Cliffracer Remover would be better named "Cliffraser." It allows you to modify the annoying aerial menaces. You can make them docile, lessen their numbers, or just remove them altogether.
- Real Signposts lets you read the signs in the game without having to walk up to them.
- Momoney applies a universal quadrupling of cash to all NPC merchants. You can apply the strategy for selling valuables outlined above and get huge bundles of cash much quicker.
- FasterWalk drastically increases the walking and running speed of the characters, letting you zip around the world faster. Be warned: The

author of this mod thought the game was too easy and has made modifications to other skills. You might want to check the following skills and manually edit them back to their default values.

Skill	Default Value	Value After FasterWalk Mod
Alteration	1	.75
Ax	1.2	.5
Block	2.5	.2
Blunt	1	.5
Conjuration	1	.75
Destruction	1	.75
Hand-to-hand	1	.5
Heavy	1	.5
Illusion	1	.75
Light	1	.5
Long	1	.5
Mark	1	.5
Medium	1	.5
Mysticism	1	.75
Restoration	1	.75
Short	.75	.25
Spear	1	.5
Unarmored	1	.5

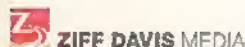


The Real Signposts plug-in is a simple yet great addition.

To use mods, just put the .ESP file in your Morrowind\Data Files directory. Then select the Data Files option on the game's Autoplay screen to activate them. To find mods and plug-ins, visit:

Morrowind Files at www.morrowindfiles.com
Morrowind Sumnil at www.rpgplanet.com/morrowind/

The official Morrowind site at www.elderscrolls.com



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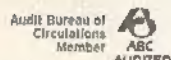
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Greenspeak

I Am Not a Crook

If GTA3 is so bad, why does it feel so good? By Jeff Green

"Oh my god. That is horrible. You aren't giving that a good review, are you?"

My wife is standing behind me as I play *Grand Theft Auto III* on the PC. She is appalled.

"C'mon, honey," I say. "Lighten up. It's not that offensive."

I am mowing down a crowd of pedestrians in my stolen car as I say this. Then I pull up next to a prostitute. After a brief negotiation, she climbs into the car. I drive to a deserted alley, park, and then sit back and watch the car rock up and down while my health points replenish. When we're finished, the prostitute gets out of the car and starts walking away.

"Oh no you don't!" I exclaim. I quickly get out of the car, shoot the woman, and then take my money back.

"That is unbelievable," my wife says.

"I know" I reply. "Like I was gonna pay for that!"

Of course I know this is not what she meant. I know why she was offended. And I suppose I should be offended too—in theory. As a bona fide Berkeley-dwelling, left-wing, food-not-bombs, what-about-the-children, Gaia-loving wuss, I should recognize and condemn GTA3 as a morally bankrupt, gratuitously violent travesty, and then go eat some wheat grass.

There's only one problem: I love this game.

I'm not the only one. GTA3 was the best-selling video game of 2001, with sales upward of 6 million copies on the PS2, and, as of this writing, it's now at the top of the PC charts. Our pals over at *Official PlayStation Magazine* named it Game of the Year in 2001, and even *The New York Times* praised it as "an amazing game."

I'm not saying that this makes it OK. I'm not saying that popularity proves the validity or worthiness of anything (10 million Celine Dion fans can be wrong). But, clearly, this game is hitting a nerve, and to dismiss it out-of-hand because of its supposed "offensiveness" is, frankly, to miss the entire point of the game.

GTA3, for all the controversy it's generated, turns out to be, at root, more comic lark than moral outrage. Other games, like the grotesque *Soldier of Fortune II*, grimly revel in human carnage, but GTA3 doesn't, despite all the violence. GTA3 is a smart-alecky M-rated cartoon—*The Sopranos* meets *The Simpsons*—with



I love this game and I refuse to feel bad about it

an irreverent wit and a healthy sense of its own ridiculousness. "Welcome to Liberty City," the manual says, "where the only dirty word is hope."

Like *The Simpsons*, GTA3 is an equal opportunity offender, poking fun at everyone and everything in its path. Sure, the game can be offensive. If you let it be, but I would submit that if you let it, you are simply playing into the hands of the game designers, who, like all classic smart-alecks, are yanking your chain on purpose. "Guns don't kill people," says a radio caller in the game. "Death kills people. It's a medical fact!" All you people getting outraged by this game—that line was written for you.

If GTA3 makes me mad at all, it's for lending itself to the hypocritical "moral" watchdogs who want to blame society's ills on games (like comic books, rap music, and other cultural bugaboos before them). All that over-the-top violence makes it an easy scapegoat for those who refuse to see where the blame really belongs: on lousy parenting and a shamefully inadequate public school system.

But don't get me started. All I really

wanted to say was how much I love this game, and that I refuse to feel bad about it. We've been rooting for bad guys for hundreds of years now—from Richard III to Hannibal Lecter—and now here's a game that lets us indulge, for fun, in being the bad guy ourselves.

Are there scary people out there who aren't gonna get the joke and play this game for all the wrong reasons? Well, yeah, sure. But you know what? Those people were scary way before GTA3 came along, and there's plenty more besides this game to keep them busy. Let's just hope they all stay in their mother's basements and keep playing video games, like, forever.

If GTA3 offends you—and we'll grant that that's perfectly understandable—then don't play it, and by all means, don't let your kids play it. But for the rest of us, the millions of sane, harmless, mostly law-abiding GTA3 players having a good time—leave us alone, will ya? We know the difference between fantasy and reality. Don't make us have to beat you senseless to prove it.

Remind Jeff that crime doesn't pay at jeff_green@ziffdavis.com.

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